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The Other Side: An Alternate Approach to the Narconarratives of Bolivia, Colombia, and Brazil

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The Other Side: An Alternate Approach to the Narconarratives of Bolivia, Colombia, and Brazil

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. Thank you Heidi, Theresa, Elise, Mom, Daddy, Bhavi, Kim, and Rick for always believing in me. I love you all.

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I've always believed in the notion that going to graduate school and writing a dissertation goes beyond a singular project and is more about building a lifetime community of friends and colleagues. Completing this project has reaffirmed that assertion for me. First and foremost, I recognize the tireless work of my supervisors in this project: Dr. Gabriela Polit Dueñas and Dr. Lorraine Moore. Without their guidance, knowledge, and patience, this project would not have been possible. I offer my sincerest thanks to the both of you.

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The Other Side: An Alternate Approach to the Narconarratives of Bolivia, Colombia, and Brazil

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Abstract: The dissertation examines novels that represent new spaces and agents of the drug trade, that re-map the trade across Latin America, and that raise questions regarding how narcotrafficking creates moral and ethical crises among people from different social classes. The corpus of literature examined includes the works of ten authors from the three countries. Juan de Recacoechea, José Wolfango Montes Vanucci, Homero Carvalho Oliva, and Tito Gutiérrez Vargas are Bolivians and write from three regions in the country. Alison Spedding is the only foreign-born author writing novels about the Bolivian drug trade included in the analysis. Darío Jaramillo Agudelo and Juan Gabriel Vásquez represent the Antioquia and Bogotá departments of Colombia. Rubem Fonseca, Patrícia Melo, and Marçal Aquino write from the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in Brazil. Within these novels, I examine mid-level roles of the illegal drug trade, those that have remained invisible in the mainstream representations. The levels of participation portrayed in the works range from urban, middle and upper class workers to land owners of the Bolivian countryside. My emphasis on the implications of these less spectacular roles shows that the moral decay, lack of values, and the consumer frenzy are not exclusive of the poor. The upper classes are driven by the same ambitions to access the money of the drug trade. In order to reconsider the use of narcofiction as an effective

tool for narrating the realities of the illegal drug trade, I propose a reading of how the power and influence of narcotrafficking expose a lack of scruples in the search for financial gain on the part of what I call mid-level participants. Such a term helps me give visibility to the actions of these characters that are so needed in the business: money launderers, corrupt police officers, drug mules. This reading makes it possible to also consider the issues of culpability and impunity and the social and political divisions which are created to maintain these structures.

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INTRODUCTION

"Como a Rosario le pegaron un tiro a quemarropa mientras le daban un beso, confundió el dolor del amor con el de la muerte. Pero salió de dudas cuando despegó los labios y vio la pistola" (Franco Ramos 9).[1] In the first two lines of text, Jorge Franco Ramos evokes love, lust, death, and violence, to open his novel *Rosario Tijeras* (1999), the tale of a female assassin of the drug trade, or *sicario*, from the shantytowns, or *comunas*, of Medellín, Colombia. This beautifully choreographed scene of brutality and sensuality presents the title character, Rosario Tijeras, as police gun her down in the arms of her lover. Her story as a hired assassin for the local drug cartel unfolds in a series of memories narrated by her romantic partner, Antonio. Superficially, the imagery of the female assassin as the face of the violence of the drug trade seems to challenge the hegemonic representation of violence in narcotrafficking as a predominantly masculine sphere.[2]

Yet as the tale of Rosario Tijeras' violent past emerges through Antonio's flashbacks, it becomes increasingly evident that she does not actually transform the role of the male sicario. As Margarita Jácome has noted in *La novela sicaresca* (2009), Rosario instead adjusts to it, displaying the audacity needed to perform her job "like a man" (147). This seemingly masculine dominance granted to her by the profession is then inverted when she is forced to use her body and sexuality to satisfy the whims of her boss and also to attract potential targets, resulting in the construction of a character with

[1] Franco Ramos, Jorge. *Rosario Tijeras*. Barcelona: Brijalbo Mondadori, S.A., 2000.

[2] In *Narrating Narcos: Culiacán and Medellín*, Gabriela Polit Dueñas notes that even the term *sicario* to reference hit men only began to circulate popularly in Colombia after the mid-1980s, when the sicarios gained notoriety for being employed by the large drug cartels, most notably Pablo Escobar in Medellín.

the traits of the *femme fatale* (144, 146).[3] While unique in its use of a female protagonist to depict the rising urban violence in 1990s Medellín, *Rosario Tijeras* is part of the early corpus of a new form of literary and cultural representation of the drug trade which gained momentum and attention throughout the 1990s; the *sicaresca*.[4]

The presence of the hired gun in the Colombian social and cultural spheres is not uncommon. In *Narrating Narcos: Culiacán and Medellín* (2013), Polit Dueñas explains that, "Paid assassins have played a role throughout Colombia's long history of violence and war (they were called *pájaros, chusma*, and *contra chusma*, depending on the side they fought during the period known as La Violencia), and have existed as characters with the mysticism and idiosyncrasies attributed to guerrilla and paramilitary members" (112). These men were traditionally employed to augment personal security forces and, more often than not, supplant the local law enforcement and military authorities. Jácome goes on to explain that the sicario holds a hybrid identity of both rural and urban elements, with the former especially present in relation to their style of killing, religiosity, and language (*La novela sicaresca* 204). This creates a mystique surrounding the sicario's life in Colombian society, as rumors of shrines for protection and balas rezadas, or blessed bullets, emerge with stories of hit jobs.

As the urban violence in Medellín escalated in the mid-1980s and 1990s, with confrontations occurring between government, paramilitary, and narco forces, sicarios were hired by the cartel bosses to act as their agents of violence. The relationship

[3] In American hard-boiled detective novels of the 50s, the figure of the *femme fatale*, or fatal woman, appears as a beautiful, promiscuous woman who lures the protagonist into complicated situations, either as his client or as his target, but is also capable of being a criminal herself or shooting her way out of trouble. In many stories, however, the *femme fatale* is usually killed. For more on the use of the *femme fatale* in American crime fiction, see Lee Horsley's *The Noir Thriller* (2001).

[4] The term itself was originally coined by author Héctor Abad Faciolince in his 1995 essay "Estética y narcotráfico". The word *sicaresca* is a twist on the classic picaresque novel of 16th century Spain, which follows the exploits of a scoundrel or rogue of a lower social class as he uses street smarts and savvy to navigate the day to day. The stories are told using plain language and realism.

between the cartels and the sicarios, most notably Pablo Escobar in Medellín, marks an important change in the history of narcotrafficking. Through this relationship, public attention was shifted to the sicario as the source of the nation's harshest narco-related violence – even crimes that may have been committed by other agents, such as paramilitary, were attributed to the sicarios – and in the popular narrative of the trade, the source of the phenomenon of Colombian narcotrafficking itself was articulated in relation to the comunas of cities like Medellín through the assassinations.

The sicaresca, as a style of cultural representation, arose out of this intense focus on these new forms of urban violence confronting Colombian society. This new subgenre encompassed the many forms of artistic production – literature, film, plastic arts – which portrayed the language and realities of this segment of the illegal drug trade, entering the comunas to show how these agents act as both victims of violence and purveyors of a form of urban violence (*Narrating Narcos* 116). Under this classification, works portraying the lives of the sicarios incorporated the spoken language of the comunas, relaying a heightened sensibility to the alternate lived experience of the drug trade in these marginal sectors of the city, and placed the sicario as the protagonist of his – or her – own tale, as opposed to just a secondary character. In addition to *Rosario Tijeras*, notable works include Mario Bahamón Dussán's *El sicario* (1990), Víctor Gaviria's film *Rodrigo D. No futuro* (1989), Alonso Salazar's non-fiction account *No nacimos pa' semilla* (1990), and Fernando Vallejo's *La virgen de los sicarios* (1994). The publication and distribution of these works begins to resonate with Colombian and foreign audiences alike, garnering increased attention to the phenomenon of the sicarios of Medellín, in particular, and the authors who portray them. Vallejo's *La virgen de los sicarios* goes on to become a film in 2000, directed by Barbet Schroeder, while Franco

Ramos' *Rosario Tijeras* enjoys a longer run in the spotlight; becoming a film in 2005 and a television series in 2010.

The sicaresca serves as an important marker with regard to artistic production portraying the drug trade. The longevity of the genre shows a continued interest among consumers for these types of images and this unique version of the narrative of the trade. The sicaresca engages in a coding of the world of the narcos, in particular the one in the comunas. This coding defines practices of violence, language, and religion, and, more often than not, ends up criminalizing lower socio-economic classes in the process. Yet the sicaresca only represents one end of the spectrum when representing the trade. Other forms of narco-cultural production highlight the counterpart to the sicario; the capo, or boss. With regard to the case of Pablo Escobar in Medellín, this corpus of literature is composed primarily of semi-journalistic accounts taken from known associates or family members of Escobar and has a tendency to lean towards sensationalism in its reporting.[5] Revealing a trajectory similar to *Rosario Tijeras*, Alonso Salazar's detailed biographical investigation of the legacy of Escobar, *La parábola de Pablo* (2001), is also brought to television in the form of a television series in 2012.[6]

Beyond the Colombian context, there has been an explosion in cultural production, including film, text, and music, that grapple with the politics of representing the trade. An entire industry of narcoculture surrounding these varying media and genres continues to produce and promote the many aesthetics of this form of popular culture.

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[5] Prominent examples include Roberto Escobar Gaviria's *Mi hermano Pablo* (1995), Rosso José Serrano's autobiography *Jaque Mate: de cómo la Polícia le ganá la partida a "El Ajedrecista" los cartels del narcotráfico* (2000), Mark Bowden's *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw* (2001), and Ron Chepesiuk's *Drug Lords: The Rise and Fall of the Cali Cartel* (2003), Astrid Legarda Martínez's *El verdadero Pablo: sangre, traición, y muerte* (2005), Virginia Vallejo's *Amando a Pablo, odiando a Escobar* (2007).

[6] The television series is titled *Escobar, Patrón del mal* and is produced by Caracol Television, one of Colombia's largest television producers. The series is later brought to an American audience by Univision.

Just the attachment of the word "narco" to any given element of cultural production creates a charged term, capable of evoking the most stereotypical images of the trade by mere mention of the word. Beginning with the popular Mexican style of music known as narcocorridos, or narcoballads, other examples include narconovelas (narconovels), narcoarchitecture, narcotelenovelas (narco soap operas), and narcobling (narcojewelry), among others. In the literary world, these works encounter local media and official discourses and, in the process, breathe life into the local and popular narratives of the trade. Despite this popularity, archetypes of the upper and lower echelons of the trade, such as the capo-sicario dichotomy presented above, continue to focus on the violence and materialism created by the trade and unjustly cast the lower socio-economic classes as the sole culprits. There is a stratification of the population occurring in these narratives, as if always seeking to answer the question; where does the violence of the business come from?

This need to highlight the urban violence corresponds to a continuing trend in relation to representation and reality occurring in contemporary Latin American narratives over the last thirty years. For example, Karl Erik Schollhammer's "Os cenários urbanos da violência na literatura brasileira" explores this relationship with violence throughout the history of contemporary Brazilian literature. Schollhammer notes that from the early 1970s to the late 1990s, the representation of violence in fiction pushes at the very limits of representation. The reality of urban living can only be portrayed in fiction up to a defined limit, beyond which it becomes necessary to reassess how violence is codified in these texts and contexts (authorship, editorial market, public perception, etc.) in order to maintain accessibility and comprehension (238 – 239). In essence, a successful portrayal of violence in literature comes from situating the narrative on the margin of reality. Schollhammer's observations gain greater complexity when

placed into dialogue with Paulo Lins' *Cidade de Deus* (1997), arguably the most popular work of Brazilian narcofiction to date. While hyper-realistic in its portrayal of the changing community and lives of the City of God neighborhood, the intensity of the narrative, with respect to the growing use of violence and crime in relation to the changing drug trade, approaches Schollhammer's limit of representation.[7] The average reader doesn't have access to the code of ethics and behavior dictating the growing violence in the Cidade de Deus neighborhood, so the fighting and the killing appear foreign and spectacular. Like *Rosario Tijeras*, a work of fiction, and *La parabola de Pablo*, a work of non-fiction, Paulo Lins' novel, *Cidade de Deus*, spurs a cultural phenomenon, becoming an international blockbuster film and drawing greater media attention, both positive and negative, to the problem of drugs and violence in Rio de Janeiro. As with the sicaresca novels, *Cidade de Deus* centers the problem of narcotrafficking in Brazil in the *favelas*, or shantytowns, showing the agents of violence as emanating from this space and localizing drug related criminality to the poorer sectors of the city.

Overall, the production of narcofiction over the last 30 years has shown a propensity for two common tropes of representation. In addition to the depiction of marginal, underserved, and violent urban areas, another common focus is on the glamour, power, and materialism of the capos of the trade (i.e. Roberto Escobar's *Mi hermano Pablo*). Literary scholarship often engages narcofiction with relation to these two limited planes of representation. However, this presents a glaring omission in the narrative and overall history of the trade. Consequently, we are left to wonder; how does one account for all of the other nodes in the narcotrafficking network?

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[7] Paulo Lins grew up in the neighborhood of Cidade de Deus in Rio de Janeiro. His novel grows out of his interviews and fieldwork while working as a research assistant for famed sociologist Alba Zaluar. The stories and testimonies he gathered during his work in the neighborhood form the narrative in the novel.

The illegal drug trade in the Americas has had a profound impact on political, economic, and social relations across countries and continents. This trade is perhaps one of the most significant challenges to hit the region, with the trade itself and the efforts to contain it proving equally difficult to control.[8] Additionally, narcotrafficking presents the anomaly that is driven by the same capitalist desires to produce and accumulate wealth through consumption that defines our legitimate markets. To support this, there exist an extended group of people at all levels of society who take part in the business, either implicitly or explicitly, and allow the trade to continue and grow. Though the promise of easy money from the trade may lead to conflicts in social relationships, narcotrafficking is a business that follows a capitalist structure. While writers and the cultural industry continue to promote the narratives of marginalized urban youth and upper levels of organized crime as the main agents of the drug trade, there is little attention paid to the mid-level participants of narcotrafficking. So what does an alternate narrative of the business dealings of the illegal drug trade reveal? What new limits does it establish? How do production, transport, and commercial networks connect to, or support, the capos and the shantytowns?

Seeking answers to these questions led my research project to take up the topic of the ways in which alternate narratives of the drug trade appear in novels from Bolivia, Colombia, and Brazil. These works represent new spaces and agents of the trade, they offer a new map the drug trade across Latin America, and raise questions regarding how narcotrafficking creates moral and ethical crises among people from different social classes. In this corpus of literature, I examine the works of ten authors from the three

[8] See Michael Kenney's study of the relationship between the law enforcement and military goals of the War on Drugs and the War on Terror, *From Pablo to Osama: Trafficking and Terrorist Networks, Government Bureaucracies, and Competitive Adaption* (2007), which includes a discussion on the mutually adaptive efforts of trafficking networks and law enforcement to elude one another.

countries. Juan de Recacoechea, José Wolfango Montes Vanucci, Homero Carvalho Oliva, and Tito Gutiérrez Vargas are Bolivians and write from three regions in the country. Alison Spedding is the only foreign-born author writing novels about the Bolivian drug trade. While British in origin, Spedding has lived in and researched the Yungas region of Bolivia for over 20 years. Darío Jaramillo Agudelo and Juan Gabriel Vásquez represent the cities of Medellín and Bogotá in Colombia. Rubem Fonseca, Patrícia Melo, and Marçal Aquino write from the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in Brazil.

In the works of these authors I examine mid-level roles of the narcotraffic chain, those that have remained invisible in the traditional sicaresca works and the novels of the *favelas*. These works offer a contrast to more spectacular participation found in mainstream representations, which tend towards creating criminals of the poor and, in most cases, the racially other. The levels of participation portrayed in the works range from urban, middle and upper class workers to land owners of the Bolivian countryside. My emphasis on the implications of these less spectacular roles not only challenges the violent agents, but also shows that the moral decay, lack of values, and the consumer frenzy are not exclusive of the poor. The upper classes are driven by the same ambitions to access the money of the drug trade.

In order to reconsider the use of narcofiction as an effective tool for narrating the realities of the illegal drug trade, I propose a reading of how the power and influence of narcotrafficking expose a lack of scruples in the search for financial gain on the part of what I call mid-level participants. Such a term helps me give visibility to the actions of these characters that are so needed in the business: money launderers, corrupt police officers, drug mules. This reading makes it possible to also consider the issues of

culpability and impunity and the social and political divisions that are created to maintain these structures.

The novels I have selected occupy a publication timeframe from 1980 to 2011. These works of fiction not only make it possible to follow varying historical phases of narcotrafficking, but also contrast and compare those phases from country to country and by event between regions in a single country, like I will show when reading narratives from Bolivia. As there is little scholarship devoted to the study of mid-level roles in narcofiction, my chief aim is to call attention to the unique ways that these roles show the construction of a frame of ethics on a criminal scale, where neoliberal economic ambition for access to wealth is cast as a common driving force for participants in the drug trade across social classes and regions.

NARRATION AND READING

There is no clear-cut, standard way of narrating the experience of narcos. Narcotrafficking exists on constant layering and intermingling of multiple elements – including social, political, and economic factors, among others – so the narrations of this world must do the same.[9] The topic of drug trafficking is frequently cast as a global phenomenon, encompassing common themes of organized crime, death, violence, and money in a narrative capable of muting the regional and local nuances of the trade. Yet many of the novels that actively portray the world of the illegal drug trade fall back on very distinct and local narrations, resisting the impulses of Manichean narratives that criminalize the poor. While universal themes certainly abound in the world of the narcos, especially with respect to the capitalist impulses of the business and its structure, the tales

[9] See Paul Gootenberg's *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug* (2008) for a complete history of the development of the cocaine trade throughout Latin America, including discussions of the constantly changing nodes of production, sale, or distribution of cocaine.

and sagas of the trade are grounded in a distinct local context. The novels I analyze in this dissertation, while available for international distribution, are unique in their ability to capture the "little narratives" of the local drug trade. The authors' proficiency in storytelling comes from their capacity to incorporate the distinct characteristics of each region and to go beyond the stereotypes of the trade to reveal other participants.

Through close reading of the local elements in these narratives of the trade, my project reflects how the reading of novels can act as forms of Foucault's "return to knowledge" and provide an example of surpassing the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" occurring in local criticisms (81).[10] A two-fold term, Foucault conceived subjugated knowledges as first historical contents that had been hidden or cloaked through systemization of knowledge and second as a set of knowledges that had been "disqualified" or deemed inadequate in these new systems of thinking (82 – 83). The novel provides a source to help us recover this second definition of subjugated knowledges; the local, particular, and popular narratives regain their merit and contribute to successful criticism of power and knowledge structures. In performing close analysis of the narcofictions selected for this project, I reconstitute the "subjugated knowledges" of the drug trade, showing how, through fiction, it is possible to account for the invisible or ignored roles in the long chain of participation. For instance, in the first chapter dealing with the literature of the middleman, I show how the perspective of the professor in accessing the middlespace creates a narco-epistemology, essentially collecting a series of subjugated knowledges of the trade. These reconstitutions through the analysis of the texts and plots in the dissertation open an additional discussion of the many boundaries and borders that are also transgressed and redefined in the novels. In addition to my

[10] Foucault, Michel. "Lecture One: 7 January 1976." Trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972 – 1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981. 78 – 108.

primary analysis involving the conception of alternate agents of the drug trade, and the many undisclosed consequences of this involvement, my reading opens itself to a secondary analysis of the many borders and divisions rearticulated in the novels.

A SECONDARY EXAMINATION OF GENRE

This study thus embarks on a complementary analysis of the limits and lapses of the varying crime fiction genres employed across the novels studied in the project. In addition to my own classification of these works as narcofiction, the novels also expand the notion of crime fiction, mirroring the push towards new forms of this writing proposed by Hans Bertens and Theo D'han in *Contemporary American Crime Fiction* (2001). Bertens and D'haen note that in contemporary crime fiction, "Regardless of ethnic and gender background, we find that social issues dominating public discussion at the time of writing increasingly filter into crime writing" and "New, also, is that the social issues impinge on the private life" (6). Like their American counterparts, the Latin American authors in my project narrate varying crimes, motives, and criminals throughout the stories, by relaying the social issues associated with the drug trade and, in the process, do not adhere to a strict classification of crime fiction, such as hard-boiled, detective fiction, or legal thriller. One common departure includes the geographic displacement of crime in the novels. For instance, the three Brazilian authors included in my study purposefully evoke the western national border in their narratives. The crimes that are committed push towards this national boundary and establish an inventive dialogue with the border, bringing into question the significance of crimes that navigate these national and political divisions. Additionally, my work opens a discussion regarding the uses of and challenges to gendered roles in these crime fictions. Alternately, the works of Homero Carvalho Oliva and Juan Gabriel Vásquez challenge

the limits narrating crime through their processes of information sharing. Both novels build upon rumors and memories of the crimes committed to reveal political discursive positions regarding the effects of narcotrafficking on the communities portrayed. Alison Spedding's narration of crime challenges the genre altogether by creating an independent, indigenous, female, criminal protagonist who gains the reader's sympathies and support by the end of the novel. The intent of this engagement with new interpretations of crime fiction throughout the dissertation is to augment my primary analysis of the invisible roles of narcotrafficking in these works of fiction. Yet this secondary study sets a space for continued academic study of these works of narcofiction while maintaining an original approach to the texts.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 1, "Middlemen in Narconarratives of Bolivia and Colombia," examines the figure of the man of letters involved in the illegal trade, as depicted by Bolivian and Colombian novelists Juan de Recacochea, José Wolfango Montes Vanucci, Darío Jaramillo Agudelo, and Juan Gabriel Vásquez. These works challenge the hegemonic depictions of the trade by examining a turn to illicit activities for profit by an unlikely criminal – the professor – as they attempt to recoup their traditional positions of privilege in society. My analysis highlights the process by which these middle to upper class intellectuals succumb to the ethos of the narcos, changing the classed perception of criminality and morality in the drug trade. To this end, I use Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's conception of "desiring machines" as outlined in *Anti-Oedipus*, highlighting the idea of interconnected networks based on individual participation. I also borrow from Rossana Reguillo's original concept of the "narco-machine" to show how these men of letters become components of "narco-machines" in their turn to the illegal drug trade. I

then examine how these conventional purveyors of knowledge come to narrate the new histories and epistemologies of the world of the narcos. I focus on the pressures of their change of profession and later enlistment of close familial networks to maintain their previous social status. Here, I turn to Pierre Boudieu's *Distinction* to employ his concepts of "titles" and the creation of cultural capital to discuss how narcotrafficking provides these characters with new forms of capital.

Chapter 2, "Remapping the Brazilian Narcosphere," concentrates on Brazilian fiction, examining the geographic displacement of the drug trade. Authors Rubem Fonseca, Patrícia Melo, and Marçal Aquino, situate their stories on the western national border, along the frontier with Bolivia and Paraguay. The chapter's argument expands the limits on border studies by engaging in questions of geopolitical spaces along a vast regional, intra-continental border mediated by criminal activity and advancing the concept of empire in the 21st century. My project explores such relationships of power and subordination in Brazil, where the country's relative economic strength establishes it as something of an imperial power on the continent. Using the theoretical framework outlined by sociologist David Vila in *Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders*, I analyze the agents and environments that evolve in this frontier space to alter the popular depiction of the Brazilian drug trade and the significance of the border itself. José Manuel Valenzuela Arce's interpretation of cultural border relations and zones of tolerance contribute to my understanding of criminality at the frontier. Rubem Fonseca and Patrícia Melo create narconarratives that are published 28 years apart, yet both choose the border city of Corumbá to tell their tales of narcotrafficking. I dialogue with the novels' creation of expansive networks of political and moral corruption, traversing the national and regional territory, to show how violence acts as a means of negotiating regional relationships of power. Marçal Aquino's novel uses the mobility of the drug

trade and organized crime to traverse the entire western national boundary. In reconstituting his perception of the frontier, the chapter explores the textual construction of the border and then looks at those who traverse and negotiate these transnational spaces. Here, the depictions of cattle farmers, CEOs, politicians, and drug traffickers, highlight the involvement of representatives of the traditional, rural oligarchy in drug trafficking. In doing so, I question not only the permeability of the border space but also how the narratives engage in greater issues of continental impunity and corruption of narcotrafficking.

Chapter 3, "Ethnicity and Location in Bolivian Novels of the Drug Trade," examines how ethnicity, in the works of Alison Spedding, Hugo Carvalho Oliva, and Tito Gutiérrez Vargas, underscores the conflict between traditional coca growers and traffickers who grow coca as raw materials for cocaine. I analyze how ethnicity and race narrate the distinct roles of the Bolivian drug trade, including traditional coca growers, hired assassins, and migrant fortune-seekers. Additionally, my study shows the deeper social and political impact resulting from the traumatic experience prompted by the cocaine boom during the 1980s throughout the country.

Alison Spedding creates an archeology of the coca leaf in the Yungas through her trilogy of novels.[11] To analyze her second novel in this chapter, I draw upon her own ethnographic work on the Yungas region to analyze why she must turn to fiction to successfully articulate the story (archeology) of the coca and cocaine trades here. To emphasize the importance of location when narrating the trade, my analysis focuses on the various roles and positions, with special attention to labor, present in the community with relation to the production of coca for traditional use and for the production of

[11] I credit Gabriela Polit Dueñas, in her essay "Coca y utopia en la narrative de Alison Spedding" (2013), for the term archeology of coca.

cocaine. Furthermore, I analyze the impact of the creation of an indigenous female protagonist in questioning the moral divide regarding coca production. For my study of the novels of Carvalho Oliva and Gutiérrez Vargas, I turn to René Girard's concepts of sacrifice and the sacrificial victim as elaborated in *Violence and the Sacred*. I argue that the selection of the sacrificial victim in Carvalho Oliva's work, in the form of the *camba* murderer, meets the conditions needed to quell the sacrificial crisis of the community. In addition, this moment of crisis in the city of Trinidad, Beni, Bolivia resurrects the memory of the region's history with narcotrafficking, resulting in a retelling of this history and a critique of the current state of the illegal drug trade in the region. Using the same criteria for the selection of a sacrificial victim in the work of Gutiérrez Vargas, I show that there is no resolution to the sacrificial crisis in the Chapare because Gutiérrez Vargas' creation of pontential sacrificial victims is flawed. The analysis follows the author's production of a generic text, unable to account for the intricacies of the local trade, which results in a flawed narrative of the Bolivian trade.

CONCLUSIONS

The contribution of this study lies in offering a historical, geographical, and cultural account of the mid-level participants in narcotrafficking. This thesis thus takes up the discussions and debates around the literary representation of the drug trade, but sets itself apart from a body of critical studies that focus on the violent agents of the trade, above all the figure of the young urban dealer or assassin. I take issue with the critical over-emphasis on the highest and lowest levels of the drug trade and with the fact that the mid-level participants have not been the subjects of sustained critical attention. By placing novels from Bolivia, Colombia, and Brazil in dialogue, I remove the linguistic barriers that have prevented the formation of a truly transnational Latin American study

of the narratives of the middle spaces of the illegal drug trade. In doing so, my work reveals that, across linguistic, cultural, and national divides, the local narratives of these less visible roles narrate how greed, depravity, and a lack of values, are not exclusive of the poor or of any one region.

CHAPTER 1: MIDDLEMEN IN NARCONARRATIVES OF BOLIVIA AND COLOMBIA

In his 1995 essay on the state of Colombian fiction, local author and journalist Héctor Abad Faciolince denounced the growth of violent narratives depicting the drug trade, stating that "La historia de Colombia, al menos la que la mayoría de la gente lee, la están escribiendo los bandidos" (516).[12] Lamenting the popular obsession with narcotraffickers and sicarios from Medellín, Abad Faciolince creates a uniquely Colombian term to classify these works; the sicaresca.[13] While innovative, Abad Faciolince's use of the term sicaresca limits itself to the cultural production in the region surrounding the city of Medellín.[14] The boom in the production of sicaresca novels sprouts from an urban, violent reality left in the wake of an equally violent war on drugs in Colombia. The continued success and production of these works also stems from another influence. Gabriela Polit Dueñas' *Narrating Narcos* (2013) explains that the "effect of the narco within the cultural field . . . unquestionably determines how the works are created, how the artists position themselves in the given field, how they respond to the demands imposed by local readers and eventually, to the requirements of international publishing markets" (18). Polit Dueñas' last two points highlight how the external pressures created by a market demand for sensational images of the experience

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[12] Abad Faciolince's original article on the subject, "Estética y narcotráfico," was published in 1995 in the magazine *Número 7*. This quote comes via the reprinted version of the same article, which appeared in a 2008 volume of the *Revista de Estudios Hispanicos*.

[13] As presented in my Introduction, the term *sicario* refers to the paid assassins employed by the narcotraffickers. Following the fall of large Colombian trafficking organizations, in particular that of Pablo Escobar, the sicarios continued working independently, carrying out kidnappings, robberies, assassinations, and political intimidation. Abad Faciolince's term *sicaresca* is a play on the words sicario and picaresca, a popular genre of fiction that developed in Spain in the 16th century, and continues to influence literature today.

[14] In 2008, Oscar Osório's "El sicario en la literatura colombiana" challenges the geographic limitation set by Abad Faciolince, showing that novels focusing on the sicario appeared in other cities, such as Cali, as early as 1988. Osorio, Oscar. "El sicário em la literatura colombiana." Poligramas 29. (2008): 61---81. Print

of the drug trade establish a benchmark of cultural representation. In the case of Colombia of the mid-1990s, this benchmark is the sicaresca works focusing on the new agents of violence, the youth from Medellín's comunas or shantytowns. In a market saturated with images and narratives of capos and sicarios, how does one call into question the hegemonic representation of the drug trade?

To address this question, the following chapter focuses on the works of fiction that precisely narrate the less visible spectrum of participants in the illegal drug trade in Colombia and Bolivia. I focus on Darío Jaramillo Agudelo's *Cartas cruzadas* (1994) and Juan Gabriel Vásquez's *El ruido de las cosas al caer* (2011), two novels that present an alternate portrait of the drug trade in Colombia. These novels purposefully draw attention to the non-spectacular and underrepresented characters of the illegal business, contrasting the growing body of narcoliterature dealing with sicarios. The second set of novels is from Bolivia. I will discuss Juan de Recacochea's *La mala sombra* (1980) and Jose Wolfango Montes Vanucci's *Jonás y la ballena rosada* (1987).

A broader account of participation emerges within this body of literature, in which the accomplice is distanced from the hypervisible and significantly more violent world of the uppermost and lowermost echelons of the business. The protagonists depicted in these works can best be described as the middlemen. Within this middle space of the drug business, roles can range from initial production of the crop (coca leaves and marijuana), to the processing of the drug (cocaine), to its mass transportation and distribution and, finally, to the money laundering. By examining the use and development of these middle roles in the novels, it is possible to identify several key common elements across the narrations which all result from the growth of illegal drug trafficking. These include the use of familial networks to access employment, the unexpected rise of personal economic struggles, and varying crises of identity.

Borrowing the theoretical lens found in the work of Giles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Rossana Reguillo, and Pierre Bourdeiu, I analyze the changes in relations of power and interpersonal relationships that occur when uninitiated male protagonists enter the middle space of the international drug trade. The original views on crime and corruption in society, and their representation in literature, serve as a subtle critique of state institutions.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE NARCONOVELS OF THE MIDDLEMEN

Juan de Recacoechea's *La mala sombra* (1980) tells the story of Manuel Irigoyen, a well-educated, yet unemployed, lecturer of comparative literature recently returned to La Paz, Bolivia after several years of political exile in Stockholm. A member of La Paz's upper social circles through both his lineage and marriage into a well-established paceña family, Manuel's employment situation forces him to live in the home of his mother-in-law, Doña Inés, who constantly ridicules him for his failure to provide economic support for his family.[15] Unable to fully assimilate back into La Paz's elite society, Manuel accepts a job as a drug courier offered by a childhood friend who wants to help him resolve his financial problems.

Jose Wolfango Montes Vanucci's *Jonás y la ballena rosada* (1987) uses dark humor and sarcasm to narrate the life of Jonás Larriva; a frustrated, upper middle class, habitually unemployed, high school history teacher, who begins a heated love affair with his sister-in-law, Julia, in the city of Santa Cruz. Jonás' aimless wanderings through the various jobs obtained for him through the personal connections of his in-laws, as well as his relationship with Julia, provide the backdrop needed to criticize the crisis-ridden

[15] The term *paceña* refers to people from the city of La Paz.

Bolivian city of the late 1980s. The novel shows the ideological tensions between Santa Cruz's traditional elite and the nouveau riche that emerged with the cocaine trade.

Darío Jaramillo Agudelo's *Cartas cruzadas* (1995) is an epistolary novel in which the exchange of letters and access to personal diaries recount the life trajectories of a trio of friend; Luis, Esteban, and Raquel. Tracing the lives of the characters for over a decade, the novel shows Luis' metamorphosis from simple university professor of literature to a transnational money launderer. Luis' transformation highlights the impact this has on his best friend Esteban and wife Raquel. In doing so, the novel also accounts for the broader societal changes occurring in the cities of Medellín and Bogotá.

Juan Gabriel Vásquez's *El ruido de las cosas al caer* (2011) is a narrative history of the various phases of the illegal drug trade in Colombia. The early years are shown through the life of Ricardo Laverde, Elaine Fritts, and the involvement of the Peace Corps in the production and trafficking of marijuana. The trauma and aftermath that resulted from the later years of violence generated by the conflict between the State and the narcotraffickers comes through the depiction of law professor Antonio Yammara. By intersecting the lives of Ricardo Laverde and Antonio Yammara through an act of violence, the novel establishes a register of the trans-generational experiences lived as a result of the continuing violence and impact of the illegal trade in Colombia.

It should be noted that the range of publication dates of the novels in no way hinders the impact of the dialogue established across the works. To the contrary, in tracing the narratives of the illegal drug trade across a wider chronological scope, it is possible to establish the ever-present impact of the middlemen and the middle space. Recacoechea and Montes Vanucci publish their novels (1980, 1987) close to the time narrated in the books, creating stories that seem to be the product of the authors' reactions to the conditions of the moment. In contrast, Jaramillo Agudelo and Vásquez look to the

past to establish a record of the events that caused the existing living conditions. The protagonists in all four novels become middlemen. They are educators – professors and teachers – who enter narcotrafficking at the center point of the process, where money laundering and international smuggling of processed cocaine occur and their activities could be viewed as white-collar crime. They reside and operate in large urban areas, navigating the prosperous neighborhoods of their cities. Through the depiction of the middleman, in the works of fiction dealing with different historical moments and created in these two countries, the novels challenge the dominant images of the poor marginalized youth who are depicted as the main participants in the drug trade.

POSTMODERN THEORY AND THE CULTURAL-SOCIAL CRITIQUE OF TASTE IN NARCOTRAFFICKING

One of the primary impulses that push the protagonists of these novels to enter into the illegal trade is the necessity of belonging. The power and influence of the drug trade, as it has been extensively documented in Roberto Laserna's El fracaso del prohibicionismo (2011) and Francisco Thoumi's Illegal Drugs, Economy, and Society in the Andes (2003) regarding Bolivia and Colombia, supplant the traditional social order, not completely displacing its structures but instead corrupting them. When this happens, the citizen is caught in a moral and ethical void in which it is unclear to which structures of power he or she belongs, resulting in a crisis of values.

To better understand these changes and crises in the novels, I borrow ideas from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. I examine Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of the desiring-machine, as outlined in their *Anti-Oedipus* (1983), in the middle space of the illegal drug trade. In their work, the desiring-machine can include machines involved in production processes and machines interconnected to other machines, with the term "machine" freely applicable to physical machines as well as people. Outside of the

production of physical capital and goods, these machines can also be responsible for producing cultural practices, social structures, and political organizations. The key to this production is the lack of stasis; no matter which part is most active, all of the machines are constantly moving and connecting to one another. This translates into the world of cocaine trafficking through the hierarchical structure of the trade and the interdependence of its many participants. In narcotrafficking, there is also a lack of stasis, as its many components, such as political influence and corruption, are constantly in motion to aide in the continued production and growth of the trade. This constant motion equally influences the participants who enter the trade in the middle space, as the desire for wealth and production of wealth create their own sequence of desiring-machines that subvert ethical and moral reservations about participating in narcotrafficking.

The individual desiring-machine and its many parts never form an independent, whole machine. Rather, all machines that are formed are perpetually linked to other machines, creating an internal mechanism that assures reproduction of the same. In the real world, these machines are the people, media, institutions, law enforcement, et cetera, that we encounter in our daily lives, both in private and in public. Together, these elements form a grid of inter-connected desiring-machines, bodies without organs, which encapsulate us.

From Deleuze's and Guattari's theoretical construct, Rossana Reguillo develops the original notion of the "narco-machine", as presented in her essay "The Narco-Machine and the Work of Violence: Notes Toward its Decodification," to further analyze how desiring-machines manifest themselves in the illegal drug trade, a concept I apply to the analysis of the novels in this chapter.[16] Reguillo uses their concept of the machine to

[16] Reguillo's essay appears in a special edition of the *E-Misférica* online journal (Winter 2011) examining the current state of cultural and media production and studying of the world of narcoculture. Reguillo's term "narco-machine" gives the issue its name. http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/e-misferica-82

elaborate how the drug trade creates an almost absolute control for narcotraffickers over the lives of citizens. The narco-machine generates astounding levels of power and violence for those in control of it. As a result, the individual's will to resist the allure or pull of joining the narco-machine is nearly negated. In narcotrafficking, an all-encompassing grid of narco-machines surrounding the individual also emerges, as the trade has the ability to connect to nearly all aspects of a person's life, again, both private and public. The narco-machine has the capacity to change or corrupt the individual's ethical and moral boundaries regarding participation in the drug trade by facilitating that person's access to material gains.

To reinforce the concept of a narco-epistemology formed by the perspective and search for hidden knowledges of the educators in the novels, I incorporate Michel Foucault's discussion of power and knowledge, specifically the idea of the "return to knowledge" in criticism as developed in his "Lecture One: 7 January 1976" delivery at the Collège de France.[17] Here, Foucault recounts the re-emergence of criticisms of totalitarian theories, this time from the local levels. Part of the process of subverting the dominant power and knowledge structures that have guided criticism is to go back to the local level, to initiate "a return of knowledge" that seeks to recover previously discarded views and ideas in an "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (81). To access these subjugated knowledges, Foucault suggests recovering buried historical contents and also returning to the local narratives and the regional knowledge that had been discarded by dominant structures. I build upon this return to subjugated knowledges through the experience of the middleman in the trade, showing how their navigation in the world of

[17] This lecture is reproduced as part of the chapter and essay "Two Lectures – Lecture One: 7 January 1976" included in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972 – 1977* (1981), edited by Colin Gordon.

the narcos offers alternate knowledges of that world that may otherwise have remained hidden.

I incorporate Pierre Bourdieu's ideas regarding the formation of taste and the need to conform to a bourgeoisie or middle class aesthetic found in *Distinction* (1984). The formulations of the social space, the habitus, and the space of life-styles, provide further insight as to the perceived necessity of belonging referenced earlier. In Bourdieu's conception of taste, larger structures guide personal decisions about consumption of culture and material goods. For example, education, as a guiding structure, teaches the individual an appreciation for high culture and instills a desire to seek out this culture. The educational structure grants the individual's cultural capital. This cultural capital is key to maintaining the individual's access to a social class. Yet within these classes, there is also the expectation of a class habitus.

Bourdieu develops this idea of habitus across several of his works and it can be generally understood as a behavior and physical disposition which is imposes and reinforces a social and ethical code in given conditions or in given environments. Hence, beyond simple access, association with a determined social class brings with it the expectation that the individual will maintain the class habitus of that group. While the individual has his or her own free will to decide what their particular "tastes" will be within this group, there still exists a strong pressure to conform to the habitus of this group. Under these conditions, living a particular "life-style" involves making decisions that follow the group habitus. The desire to belong, or to form part of the life-style, drives compliance with the group norms. Thus both education and peer groups influence the legitimate and personal decisions that maintain an individual's affiliation with a social class.

These concepts of the habitus with regard to taste and cultural capital through education illuminate the process of initiation and participation of middle class citizens who enter the illegal drug trade. In my application of Bourdieu to the works in this chapter, the use of habitus is too ambitious, as the middle participants changes relate more to a change in behavior. In the novels addressed in this chapter, the men of letters all come from a background, which has granted them access to advanced education and the tastes and set of behaviors of the middle class. When their affiliation to this group is threatened, either by economic strife or the imposition of a new order established by narcotrafficking, the men change their behavior to salvage this affiliation. In this way, both Bourdieu's and Deleuze's and Guatarri's conceptual frameworks shed light on the conditions which consume the individual and change the ethics regarding their consumption decisions and alter the parameters regarding what is acceptable (ethical) or unacceptable (unethical) in order to maintain access to consumption and class. The structures (i.e. machines or tastes) driving these middlemen to participate in narcotrafficking exist to maintain the social hierarchy that, in turn, supports the neoliberal economic projects in the regions, even through a business deemed illegal. The free market throughout the region creates consumer desires and defines adequate tastes that the feed the aspiration to maintain a class affiliation. Likewise, the market of the illegal drug trade creates the opportunity for great wealth and continued growth of the business, thus constantly creating openings or jobs that must be filled to assure perpetuation of the trade. In order to attract participants, the acceptable behavior of the trade is also redefined, or rather broadened, to accommodate ethically questionable behaviors in the hopes of keeping the narco-machine running. Hence entering the middle space of the trade is rooted in the desire to remain in the middle space of society at any cost.

A CHANGE OF PROFESSION

A common element in the construction of the characters in these works is that they had legitimate occupations prior to their involvement in the drug trade. While not particularly profitable, all of their initial professions are prestigious in their respective societies. These are jobs that require a high level of education. Through this level of employment, fulfillment of the neoliberal capitalist ideal for Latin American countries seems plausible.[18] Two decades after the implementation of foreign development projects in the region, as depicted in the novels, there is a continuation of the desire to conform to the economic ideal of the middle class, but there is an institutional failure (both democratic and economic) to provide access to this ideal. This failure coincides with, and in many cases corroborates, the "boom" of the illegal drug trade in countries like Bolivia and Colombia.

Before examining the literature that would come to mirror this particular time period, it becomes useful to first examine the broader, international contexts that paved the way for such tremendous growth. Though the story of the "boom" presented in this study comes from the perspective of local authors publishing fiction in specific countries, it can only be fully understood in relation to the history of American political interventions and military operations which resulted from the institutional dominance of American foreign policy as well as the establishment of a war on drugs in the region. Further, this dominance stems from the military escalation that occurred in relation to the Cold War.

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[18] In *Latin America's Middle Class: Unsettled Debates and New Histories* (2013), David Parker collects seminal essays on the Latin American middle class from the first half of the 20th century in one part of the book and then pits these against modern studies of the middle class in the region. Parker himself observes that, "In the late 1950s and early 1960s, when Latin America was one of the key hot spots in a world polarized by the Cold War, many U.S. scholars and policymakers invested hope in the benefits that might come from a growing middle class" (5).

It was during this period that the U.S. also began to closely monitor the influence of Cuba in its own region. The possibility of Soviet-style Communism being sown so close to home prompted American policy makers to reevaluate economic and political investment within their own hemisphere through the Alliance for Progress. Across Latin America, development projects such as land reform were implemented to create a forced, mass modernization while military strategists collaborated to train the future leaders of these nations, thus inhibiting the spread of Communism. Grace Livingston's *America's Backyard: The United States and Latin America from the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror* highlights how these two tactics worked in tandem to achieve the military objective of creating counterinsurgency in the region:

> From the beginning, the Alliance for Progress was a two-pronged strategy: it sought to undercut support for the Left through economic development, while using military methods to suppress guerrillas and other 'subversives.' The reforms petered out, but the military side of the Alliance endured. Military aid and training programs rose dramatically in the 1960s; annual US military assistance in the first five years of the decade was double what it had been in the 1950s. Between 1964 and 1968 alone, 22,059 Latin American official were trained at the School of the Americas in the Panama Canal zone…Thousands more were instructed in the field in Latin America by the US special forces. (40)[19]

Livingston's observations regarding military spending during this period indicate that President Eisenhower's fears of the growing military industrial complex were realized, as

[19] Livingstone, Grace. *America's Backyard: The United States and Latin America from the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.

a continuous flow of American weapons and supplies were needed to outfit theses Latin American trainees. Further, Livingstone's mention of the School of the Americas is essential to understanding the extent to which the US military was involved in forming the political regimes which would dominate Latin America for the next decades.

However, in light of the ineffective economic initiatives of the Alliance for Progress and the ensuing economic crisis, alternate forms of income became a necessity, thus opening a space for the rise of the illicit drug trade. In *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug*, Paul Gootenberg chronicles the historical development of the drug trade throughout Latin America, from the discovery of cocaine to present day. In examining the Cold War era, Gootenberg offers the following:

> Politics as much as profit gave life to illicit cocaine, a drug entangled in transnational relationships as much as local circumstance . . . Looking ahead, it is notable that cold war politics, along with increasingly militant foreign drug policies of the United States, remained a constant in cocaine's illicit transformation, including the dramatic shift to Colombian leadership in the early 1970s. After 1964, cocaine's transition to a boom product was accelerated by the polarizing Andean politics of the 1960s . . . which produced unstable statist regimes fraught with cold war tensions. These Andean modernizing projects of Left and Right practically invited peasants to flood into the country's choicest

> coca zones as a politically cheap U.S.-styled developmental alternative to conflictive agrarian reform. (288 – 289)[20]

Failing to offer viable development alternatives for their populations, many of the Latin American nations controlled by military regimes would later face strenuous financial hardship and shrinking economies. The implementation of neoliberal economic and political policies during these unstable times creates a new measure of success and progress, where the attainment of wealth and capital become the primary focus and the central mediator of symbolic relationships. The well being of the disadvantaged sectors of society – politically, economically, and socially – was neglected as the governments and private enterprise focused on capital generation and management. As Gootenberg observes, these conditions would in turn stimulate the drug trade, making the lucrative nature of the business more attractive to all sectors of society. As the illicit trade in cocaine increased exponentially throughout the 1970s and 1980s in the Andean region, so too did American involvement in the fight to stop it. Thus the boom in narcotrafficking, the later rise in prohibition, and subsequent war on drugs, come as a result of the neoliberal transformation of Latin America following the Cold War.

The protagonists in this chapter begin their stories with the possibility of accessing stable, legitimate employment. The initial occupations of the protagonists conform to the social norms of their societies. So what could provoke a young, professional, family man to abandon a secure, prestigious, and honest job to work in the illegal business? This question resides at the heart of these novels, exploring how the turn towards illegality reveals the pressure and influence exerted by the drug trade tranforms these characters. In this transformation of the lettered man, it becomes

[20] Gootenberg, Paul. *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008. Print.

possible to also read the reformulation of institutional and social relationships. Through this change of profession, it is also possible to understand the middleman's personal ambition. Ambition becomes a significant qualifier when compared to the construction of the sicario in the sicaresca novel. The young assassin's ambition is presented as a stigma that drives the constant pursuit of material and monetary gain through killing. When this ambition appears in the middle class subject who turns to the drug trade, it is again presented as a stigma in that the middleman is willing to compromise their ethical and moral limits to gain or maintain access to wealth. This ambition, which is spurred on by the money of the drug trade in both cases, becomes an equalizing agent that establishes a commonality between the blue-collar role of the sicarios and the white-collar role of the middleman.

In *La mala sombra*, Manuel Irigoyen worked as a university professor and a sub-secretary in a government office. Upon arrival from exile, Irigoyen explains how, "Seis meses transcurrían desde la vuelta del exilio y aún estaba sin trabajo. No era fácil, su profesión tenía la desventaja de no ser común: profesor de Literaturas Comparadas" (Recacoechea 19). Specialized, yet limited, the field of comparative literature in Bolivian academia is subject to the control of the ruling political party controlling the public university, in this case the regime of President Hugo Bánzer. His legitimate formation as a university professor seems frivolous when confronting a regime that labels such pursuits as politically dissident, thus leaving Irigoyen out of favor.[21] While dressing for a party, Irigoyen reveals the level of his past political profession when the narrator states that, "Camisa blanca a rayas azules, corbata guinda obscura y traje gris de fina tela inglesa, restos de sus tiempos prósperos como Subsecretario de Informaciones y

[21] During Bánzer's rise to power as dictator in Bolivia, he banned all left-wing political organizations and closed the nation's universities to eliminate threats from any political dissidents.

Propaganda. Las prendas ya no le caían tan adecuadamente como en el pasado" (19). These clothing relics remind him that he held a successful political appointment in the past and enjoyed the fruits of this endeavor, yet the present annoyance of the ill-fitting suit acknowledges how far-removed he is from this past life.

This sense of clothing and belonging are part of the process of fully assimilating into a given socio-economic class. In *Distinction*, Pierre Bourdieu links the choice of clothes to part of the life-style.[22] Regarding the middle-class preoccupation with choice of clothing, Bourdieu states that:

> … one finds in men's clothing (which is more socially marked, at the level of what can be grasped by statistics on purchases, than women's clothing) the equivalent of the major oppositions found in food consumption… The increased quality and quantity of all purchases of men's clothing is summed up in the opposition between the suit, the prerogative of the senior executive, and the blue overall, the distinctive mark of the farmer and industrial worker … (201)

Irigoyen possesses the outward, physical marker of his middle class (i.e. the grey suit of English fabric), a token of social capital that asserts his allegiance to the group. Yet he is displaced from that same class by not being able to practice his academic profession and having lost his appointment as sub-secretary. He has the cultural and academic capital, but he cannot maintain his position in the upper middle class because, economically speaking, he has nothing. Irigoyen displays the habits of an upper middle class male. He

[22] In *Distinctions*, Bourdieu specifically defines the habitus as "necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions; it is a general, transposable disposition which carries out a systematic, universal application – beyond the limits of what has been directly learnt – of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions" (170). This concept of the habitus reappears in several of his other works, including *Masculine Domination*.

knows how to dress for the type of party he is invited to and how to interact with the guests. As an intellectual and university professor, his academic preparation enables him to socially perform in public and engage with a crowd. Yet both of these abilities are stymied by his economic status.

In Montes Vanucci's anti-hero, Jonás Larriva, we see a similar conflict. Jonás' professional life in Santa Cruz is reduced to that of a frustrated, high school history teacher. Though employed, Jonás expresses disdain for his current occupation, stating that "Enseñar historia era para mí un oficio ingrato. Las alumnas no se interesaban en materias rancias. Pasaba semanas y semanas de tedio," and later, "Percibo que nadie me escucha. La desatención, que jamás me afectó, hoy me desagrada" (Montes Vanucci 38 – 39). Jonás' seemingly depressive demeanor stems from the lack of utility and job satisfaction provided by his current position. These observations are reinforced by the apparent disinterest demonstrated by the government towards teachers, as Jonás later ponders, "¿Por qué el gobierno no aumenta nuestro sueldo? Seguramente porque descubrieron que en época de recesión, más que el papel moneda, se desvaloriza el pergamino de la cultura… planean matarnos de hambre. Practican el genocidio de los maestros y ni un piojo estrábico reclama" (43). Unlike Manuel Irigoyen's encounter with a dictatorship politically oppressing education, Jonás' problems stem from Bolivia's economic troubles, as hyperinflation and a push for neo-liberal financial policies have practically bankrupted the nation.[23] A lack of personal motivation and no official support lead to an overall professional dissatisfaction. Jonás' humorous paranoia with relation to the government's disinterest in the plight of teachers is later inverted, as he is

[23] Montes Vanucci's novel takes place during the second presidency of Víctor Paz Estenssoro (1985 – 1989), during which time Bolivia faced exponential hyperinflation in an attempt to stabilize the economy following years of dictatorship and the corrupt practices of the Garcia Meza narco-state. For more on the story of Garcia Meza, see Appendix 1.

unceremoniously dismissed from his position by the school's director, seemingly due to the political whim of the administrators in the capital:

> DIRECTORA. A nadie despiden por falta de eficiencia o por tener carácter de almorraniento. Todas las demisiones obedecen únicamente a motivos políticos.
>
> JONÁS. ¿Motivos políticos? No milito en ningún partido. Jamás demostré preferencia ni por la mano derecha, ni por la izquierda; soy ambidextro.
>
> DIRECTORA. Es imposible no tener inclinaciones partidarias. A quien no se define ellos lo vigilan. Contratan a soplones que informan sobre las tendencias de cada uno. Son muy hábiles. Descubren simpatías ignoradas hasta por el proprio sospechoso. (107)

In this comical exchange, Jonás emerges as the opposite to Manuel Irigoyen's militancy; Jonás is completely indifferent, even apathetic, towards politics. His state of being politically "ambidextrous" makes him difficult to classify and, thus, a target for suspicion that ultimately leads him to be removed. Yet even after this misfortune, Jonás continues to receive legitimate employment through the influence of his in-laws, first at a bank and later at his mother-in-law's social services agency. His in-laws also continue providing him and his wife with food and an apartment. These decisions regarding food and housing, like Irigoyen's clothing, constitute personal decisions that fall under the classification of taste based on social origin (*Distinction* 184 – 185). While the quality of the goods purchased in both decisions is acceptable for an upper middle class family, Jonás' inability to make the decision for himself because of his unemployment creates an impasse regarding his social status.

Though Jonás does not have the political connections needed to access government institutions, he has the personal networks needed to continuously grant him access to employment and thus maintain his upper-middle class status. However, like Irigoyen, there is a growing sense of frustration in being stuck in this position without properly earning the income to justify such a status, compounded by the obstacles imposed by a broken Bolivian political system. Both protagonists have their ego, and perhaps their manhood, marred by their dependence on the financial support of their in-laws. As part of the masculine mandate for the Bolivian upper middle class, the man is supposed to act as the head of the household. Thus their behavior in the home, reinforcing their gender role within the family unit, is to be the sole provider for the family. Due to their difficulty securing employment, Jonás and Manuel Irigoyen are unable to perform this role, resulting in a disjointed family. This set of behaviors emphasizes a strict heteronormative gender role that links manhood to economic success. What results is a mounting urgency to break free from this reliance on outside financial support and assume their masculine domestic mandate, even if it means abandoning respectable forms of employment.

In the Colombian context, *Cartas cruzadas* presents the example of Luis, a successful, and even celebrated, university professor of literature. Unlike the preceding examples, Luis presents a much more stable, and even traditional, employment history. Through the letters and diaries cited in the novel, it is possible to follow Luis' academic journey as he starts out teaching lower level courses but continues attaining higher levels of education, even completing graduate studies abroad, and eventually becoming an authority in his field. In the beginning, Esteban, Luis' best friend and the recipient of his letters, describes how "Luis tiene el vicio de renegar de la universidad pero adora leer libros, le encantan las teorías . . . detesta la corbata, disfruta de un calendario que le

proporciona mucho más de los quince días de vacaciones al año de un trabajo más lucrativo, tiene vanidad de profesor" (Jaramillo Agudelo 22). Luis' wife Raquel mirrors Esteban's account of Luis, expressing that early in their relationship:

> Luis se concentraba como si nada distinto ocurriera y leía su libro, se hablaba entre dientes con murmullos, parecía tranquilo…Luis fue siempre calmado, introvertido, ordenado. A nadie le dio señas de tener una ambición oculta o unas ansias extrañas al trabajo que desempeñaba: 'me pagan por leer libros que me gustan,' decía. Y su talante era sereno, irritable con unas pocas cosas concretas. (46)

Though butting heads with the administration at diverse moments in his career, Luis nonetheless appears to be perfectly suited to his profession. Before changing occupations, Luis realizes that he has reached a high point in his academic formation, stating that, "Hay algo tedioso en todo esto: ahora, en materia de Rubén Darío, y de modernismo, soy una celebridad menor. No soy Pedro Salinas o Raimundo Lida, pero ya me citan con frecuencia en los estudios sobre el tema. Ahora, pues, cargo con un prestigio más bien estorboso" (403 – 404). Luis fully embraces his role as a professor and even feeds off of his limited academic fame. As Raquel's observations reveal, Luis' academic life appears blissful, as he is paid to read books he likes. He maintains a profession that provides him success, recognition, and stability, so what could possibly sway his desires to the point of abandoning this career in favor of one fraught with danger? Does the pressure to consistently perform and progress in academic circles take its toll on the protagonist, ultimately contributing to his decision to turn to illicit means of employment or is there a greater change in Luis' demeanor?

Finally, we have Vásquez's Antonio Yammara and Ricardo Laverde for further discussion on legitimate employment. Although Antonio doesn't become involved in the business of drugs, he is directly affected by the resulting violence of the business and also becomes the vehicle through which Ricardo's tale is told. As such, his employment holds great symbolic meaning in the text, as he explains how:

> Después de graduarme con honores . . . me había convertido en el titular más joven de la historia de mi cátedra . . . y estaba convencido de que ser profesor de Introducción al Derecho, enseñar los fundamentos de la carrera a generaciones de niños asustados que acaban de salir del colegio, era el único horizonte posible de mi vida. (16)

In his role as a professor of law, Antonio enjoys a level of privilege and pride that would otherwise be inaccessible to him, while his youth and brilliance in the subject matter provide him a sense of prominence among the faculty. Like Luis in *Cartas cruzadas*, Antonio seems to revel in this academic recognition. He takes full advantage of the cultural capital gained through his advanced education to assert his status in the professional world. His self-recognition of having reached a high point in his career triggers the ego of the university professor, as Antonio's description of the frightened faces in the classroom imply the presentation of intellectual stature and superiority when teaching a class.

Though Antonio does not directly participate in narcotrafficking, the trauma of the violence generated by the narcos derails his seemingly perfect life. The intensity of the attack he experiences and witnesses leads to an obsession to resolve the story of Ricardo Laverde that jeopardizes his career and family. As a professor of law, Antonio

follows a code that dictates the search for truth and order through the legal system. When the truth is not available, or it is unattainable, the least that can be settled for is a resolution to the question at hand. Antonio steps away from the security of his career and the safety of his home to follow his "white rabbit," Ricardo Laverde. It is only through this journey that Laverde's story is brought to light and an alternate narrative of the violence and trauma that affected a generation of Colombians emerges.

Ricardo Laverde's trade as a pilot offers an important counterpoint to the examples previously mentioned, in that, his occupation never changes throughout the novel; he is always a pilot. To better comprehend the significance of this, it is useful to recall the reassurance he gives to his bride on their wedding day, "Porque a un piloto como yo nunca le falta el trabajo, Elena Fritts. Eso es así y no tiene vuelta de hoja" (173). Ricardo's sense of security regarding his employment stems from the unique skill set needed to perform his trade. While anyone can learn to work the land or do other simple manual labor with relatively little training and oversight, learning to be a pilot and flying airplanes requires specialized training from an expert. Adding to the nobility of Ricardo's profession is his personal family history of men of valor, as his grandfather is described as a war hero and a Colombian of great military distinction, "Ése era Laverde: un capitán a quien venían a buscar en nombre del Presidente. Y así fue como el capitán y su hijo se encontraron caminando hacia la tribuna presidencial un par de pasos detrás del general De León" (116). Aviation is presented as a Laverde family legacy, granting the profession a sense of prestige. Ricardo's profession affords him a sense of worth, freedom, and financial security, but the acceptability and legality of his profession is dictated by the changing status of the load he chooses to carry. As the employer and cargo change, so too does the legitimacy of his occupation. The transportation of meat and electronics is socially and legally accepted whereas the transport of bails of

marijuana or packages of cocaine is not. This professional paradox creates an equally complex situation regarding access to social class. Ricardo never stops being a pilot nor does he abandon the life-style and behavior of a pilot. While deliveries of meat pay his bills for a time, deliveries of drugs give him access to incredible amounts of money that, in turn, change his spending habits.[24] This access to money changes his conduct in the home, as the increase in purchases appears out of sync with the expected earnings of a pilot living in the Colombian countryside. The inconsistency between life-style and environment will not continue for long. The initial optimism shared by Ricardo on his wedding night is overshadowed later in the novel, as it is also through flying in this illegal capacity that he and his family will be destroyed. A profession that starts out as genuine and full of possibilities is actually destined for failure.

Before moving on to examine why these subjects turn to the narcotics business, it is necessary to reflect further on the significance of these occupations. Excluding Ricardo Laverde, all of the protagonists work as university professors or teachers in the humanities. In this capacity, whether through history, literature or law, they instruct younger generations but also express the human condition that surrounds them. Yet in the broader cultural economy, their work as educators affords them unique privilege and status. Returning to Bourdieu's *Distinction*, we find it is possible to trace this entitlement granted by academic capital within what he terms the "Aristocracy of Culture." In the hierarchy of cultural capital, increasing degrees of education uniformly increase access to legitimate culture and recognition. Bourdieu goes on to explain the true weight of these degrees, stating:

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[24] One of the first big purchases Ricardo makes is purchasing an SUV for Elena. Seemingly out of place in the rural countryside, the vehicle represents the change in economic status granted Ricardo by the drug trade (Vásquez 182 – 183)

> This is why we must first stop to consider what is perhaps the best-hidden effect of the educational system, the one it produces by imposing 'titles,' a particular case of the attribution by status, whether positive (ennobling) or negative (stigmatizing), which every group produces by assigning individuals to hierarchically ordered classes. Whereas the holders of educationally uncertified cultural capital can always be required to prove themselves . . . the holders of titles of cultural nobility . . . only have to be what they are, because all their practices derive their value from their authors, being the affirmation and perpetuation of the essence by virtue of which they are performed. (23 – 24)

Through their education and degrees, the protagonists hold a high position in the cultural hierarchy of their respective societies that is generally accepted with little resistance. Their title and cultural worth stem from having access to and successfully completing levels of higher education. However, the novels then reveal a much different perception of the economic realities of the educators in the humanities throughout Latin America.

The study of the humanities becomes irrelevant in a world dominated by the value placed on money and property and the endless pursuit of both. The professor or educator in the humanities becomes a relic of an old order, which previously maintained a correlation between cultural capital and economic affluence. In the contemporary society contending with the influence of narcotraffickers, the educator maintains a level of prestige with regard to cultural capital, but the corresponding economic and social capital are devalued. The overarching message regarding these initial professions in the humanities have no value in a society driven by the capitalist impulses and consumer frenzy stimulated by the drug trade, making the humanities a futile endeavor. The

prestige of the educator is not recognized or compensated economically, whether because of the political influence in higher education (Irigoyen), or the decline in public education (Jonás), or even the futility of trying to use the teaching of legal studies to change a society ruled by lies (Yammara). Access to cultural capital does not guarantee placement in the social hierarchy created by a society driven by consumerism. This disconnection between the two creates a crisis of behavioral norms, as there is no clear parameter defining acceptable taste, purchasing decisions, or sources of financial support regarding this educated class in society influenced by narcotrafficking.

The academic (cultural) capital of the professors acquired through their titles affirms their position in the middle class, but does not guarantee financial prosperity. Yes, it is true that the political obstacles faced by Bolivians Manuel Irigoyen and Jonás Larriva complicate the access they have to this academic privilege, but their titles remain the same and they are never completely excluded from this socio-economic class. Herein lies the force of the novels studied in this chapter. These stories reveal how stable, educated professionals with a guaranteed access to the middle class through recognition of their titles, are lured into the world of narcotrafficking, compromising their moral and ethical beliefs and risking their personal security for the possible economic gains of the illegal drug trade.

In a different capacity, these educators not only document their own assimilation into the drug culture, but also, at times inadvertently, assume a record keeping role in their societies. In her study of "hombres letrados" in 21st century Colombian literature, Maritza Montaño Gonázlez puts forward the argument that the lettered man's participation in narcotrafficking serves to discover broader areas of the effects of drug trafficking in the national economy and Colombian society ("El narcotráfico y los

hombres de letras," 9).[25] This argument is also applicable to the Bolivian works included in this chapter. The educators in these novels relay an account of the sectors of the drug trade that are deliberately maintained invisible. Their active participation in the trade transforms the "search for rationality" noted by Montaño González into first-hand reporting of the extent to which the drug organizations can influence distinct elements of society during this period of change common across Bolivia and Colombia. In this way, the men of letters create narco-epistemologies of their involvement in the trade. They gain access to the knowledge, histories, and secrets that keep the trade functioning in their countries.

In Colombia, the narcos used violence to publically and visibly assert their presence and power in society.[26] They confronted the State through combat and armed resistance. However, beyond this public, violent display, there were multiple hidden layers of the trade which remained invisible both before and throughout the cartels' war with authorities. The educated protagonists in the novels create an epistemology of this invisible knowledge of the middle spaces, recalling various stages in the history of drug trafficking in Colombia. In this respect, *Cartas cruzadas* examines the years that preceded the worst period of violence unleashed by the narcos, while *El ruido de las cosas al caer* goes on to depict the trauma left by those years of violence. These are the private spaces and stories, deliberately less violent, which are left out of the mainstream narrative of Colombian narcotrafficking but rescued through these works of fiction. In

[25] Montaño González goes on to note that "La participación del letrado, me parece, ha intentado buscarle la racionalidad a la violencia producto de esta industria ilegal, asociándola con las instituciones, con organizaciones legales e ilegales" (9). Since Colombia's contemporary history with narcotrafficking is closely tied to rising levels of urban violence between the State, paramilitary forces, and the drug cartels, the "letrado" must try to reason how and why this continues to occurr. The essay cited here, "El narcotráfico y los hombres de letras en la literatura colombiana del siglo XXI," was presented at the XLVI Congreso Asociación Canadiense de Hispanistas at Concordia University in Montreal on May 31, 2010.

[26] This becomes particularly apparent after the assassination of Minister of Justice Rodrigo Lara Bonilla in 1984 under orders from cartel boss Pablo Escobar.

Bolivia, narcotrafficking grew with much less violence between the authorities and traffickers, in part because of the early collaboration between President García Meza and the drug cartels in 1980.[27] Like *Cartas cruzadas*, both *La mala sombra* and *Jonás y la ballena rosada* emphasize the transformation of a society, where new agents of power and a new economic class emerge as a result of the influence generated by the drug trade. As the protagonists' approximation to the trade increases, their ability to share the invisible knowledge of that trade (i.e. its corruption of society) increases in turn.

As academics, the protagonists served as traditional purveyors of knowledge, more specifically, of socially acceptable sources of information and knowledge (i.e. the humanities). When they become impoverished members of the middle class, their change of profession prompts the creation of a narco-epistemology. Through investigating, documenting, and archiving their new professions, the educators' narco-epistemologies embody Foucault's "return to knowledge" and provide an example of surpassing the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" occurring in local criticisms (81).[28] A two-fold term, Foucault conceived subjugated knowledges as first historical contents that had been hidden or cloaked through systemization of knowledge and second as a set of knowledges that had been "disqualified" or deemed inadequate in these new systems of thinking (82 – 83). The novels provide the sources needed to help us recover this second definition of subjugated knowledges; the local, particular, and popular narratives regain their merit and contribute to successful criticism of power and knowledge structures.

The narco-epistemology in these works of fiction provide a way of countering the knowledge promoted by the government, mass media, and the cultural market, regarding

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[27] See Appendix 1.

[28] Foucault, Michel. "Lecture One: 7 January 1976." Trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972 – 1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981. 78 – 108.

narcotrafficking. The emergence of this alternate epistemology does not suffer from the same subjugation as other classed positions do, such as the lower socio-economic classes. However, these accounts do account for the local, hidden knowledges. In presenting these narratives and knowledges of the middle space of the drug trade from the perspective of a middle class citizen, does the educator's gaze risk being too subjective? Not necessarily. The perspective presented is alternative, yes, but still opinionated and influenced by the educator's background; an academic, research subjectivity. They speak from the classed position of the old, cultural elite, but maintain the customs of an educator in their presentation of information. The intention of their epistemology is not to attack and dismantle the power structures they encounter, but rather to recover some sense of personal power that was threatened and lost with the change of paradigm in which consumerism and money have more value than their cultural capital, as the novels seem to indicate. Their perspective is not one under threat or lacking privilege. They provide a differing view on the relationship between power and domination, from a fictitious work, the knowledges that are not being shared in other works on the topic.

There are other elements in the novels that reinforce the act of documenting change. In *Jonás y la ballena rosada*, for example, Jonás Larriva maintains a small photography studio and shop throughout the novel. Though the practice of photography becomes a banal economic pursuit in a Bolivia ridden by hyperinflation and disinterest in art, the space of the studio is crucial for Jonás. Both the shop and the hobby become a refuge, providing the space needed for Jonás to have an affair with Julia, mourn the loss of his lover, and, eventually, giving him motivation to flee from the country. While many of the initial photographs referenced in the novel are of the naked body of Julia and kept in private, there is a moment of public exposure when Jonás hosts his first exhibition. Entitled "Jonás Larriva. Retratos. Expresión y humanismo," the collection

seeks to capture the human face in all of its possible manifestations, "severos, sonrientes, místicos, avaros, sensuales, estúpidos, animalescos . . . Algunos pacíficos, otros fieros, el conjunto de mis retratos formaban una tribu de salvajes" (Montes Vanucci 352 – 354). Through the lens, Jonás permanently records raw faces of the world around him and through the photography exposition he reminds others to become aware of the changes surrounding them, in essence to look at the faces of their own people and take note of the changes.

Likewise, the epistolary format of *Cartas cruzadas* uses the intimate narration of letters and a diary to provide chronological documentation of the process that occurred in Colombia as a result of the drug trade. The text presents the reader with a timeline of events, where the individual experiences and emotions of the person writing the letter / journal observe and question the transformations occurring in their world at that moment. As the title implies, the exchange of letters solicits the participation of the reader in the form of a response while the implicit compilation of these documents at some unknown location speaks to the importance of maintaining the record alive for others to access and learn about. The order and compilation of the documents serve as a historical archive for the changes occurring between Medellín and Bogotá in the novel. In *Narrating Narcos*, Polit Dueñas notes that "The geographical space also marks a shift from a traditional conception of national boundaries to a definition of the nation's borders as established by new commercial exchanges in a global (illegal) economy…The four cities – Medellín, Bogotá, Miami, and New York – are also the main trading hubs of the drug trade during the early 1980s" (139). Apart from providing an account of the personal impact Luis' transformation into a middleman in the drug trade has on himself and his family and friends, the exchange of letters creates a chronological, geo-political history of development of the international illegal drug trade. The inclusion of the location and date

on each letter or journal entry consistently and chronologically provides the details needed to piece together the illegal activities occurring in each of the hubs mentioned above.

In a similar fashion, *El ruido de las cosas al caer* offers a black box dichotomy, in which Ricardo's copy of the actual black box recording of the plane crash that killed his wife Elena Fritts, a form of physical evidence of the crash, is juxtaposed with the "caja de mimbre" their daughter Maya owns, containing all of the documents (letters, journals, photographs, and newspaper articles) which narrate the tragic personal relationship between the two. By granting Antonio Yammara, a representative of the generation that grew up during the boom in the Colombian drug trade and the resulting violence, access to both boxes, the novel seeks to consolidate memory and history for future generations. Through fiction, a communal coming to terms with the trauma of narcoviolence can begin, with trauma being physical and psychological and the violence manifesting in a physical or symbolic way. Antonio Yammara's generation experiences a collective catharsis in remembering the official (i.e. the black box death of Elena Fritts) and personal (i.e. Maya's collection of letters) accounts of death. Through this confrontation with the past, the Antonio Yammaras of Colombia can begin to return home and mend the national and social fabric. The memory preserved in the novels studied offers a perspective that originates from the middle class and from the drug trade, therefore exposing the often silenced-role of white-collar involvement in the business. As these initial occupations have shown, the protagonists in the novels share a unique position of privilege in their respective societies, granting them access to cultural capital and also bestowing them with a memory of the trade in their narratives. The concept of memory is elaborated here with relation to the formation of a narco-epistemology. The memories are related not only to the historical changes of Bolivia and Colombia, but also in

showing the fact the poor are not the only narcos in the drug trade. The altered moral values and codes of consumerism created by the economic order and neoliberalism permeated all social classes. The reports of trauma of this change of morals are the common core of all of these stories. The next section will show how these educated professionals are tempted by the promises of the illegal drug trade.

INITIATION AND FAMILY

Faced with economic adversity and social pressures to conform to their roles as heads of households, the protagonists in the novels confront their personal crises to determine if the turn towards the drug trade is for them. It is important to stress that while the decision to undertake a new occupation comes as a result of a series of personal and social pressures, this decision is not forced upon the protagonist under duress. The moment of commitment to the trade is not a violent act of survival, but rather a calculated gesture, an act of individual freewill. In the decision to enter the trade, the moral and ethical views may generate a sense of guilt regarding their activities, but they do little to dissuade the protagonist from acting. The ease to enter this new job is usually facilitated by close, personal relationships. By accepting to be a part of a narcotrafficking organization, the protagonist is initiated into a group that, while obeying an unknown set of rules of conduct, retains a structure that is known to the protagonist. This begins with the initiator, as to gain access to the business the protagonist only needs to look to his circles of family and friends.

As if resurrected from the dead, Jimmy Perreira emerges before Manuel Irigoyen at a dinner party and, though unknown to Irigoyen at that moment, this apparition will soon deliver the solution to his woes. In many ways, Jimmy Pereira's life mirrored that of Manuel's, as he observes that, "Habían crecido juntos en el mismo barrio paceño:

compartieron los juegos de la infancia, las primeras aventuras, los estudios de colegio y hasta yacieron en el mismo lupanar peripatéticamente enamorados. Un buen día allá por los años cincuenta y tantos el amigo Jimmy desapareció" (Recacoechea 34). With similar histories and social status, it is later revealed that, like the Irigoyen family, Pereira's family also faced a period of exile and lost most of their wealth. Yet Jimmy Pereira that Manuel encounters at the party is a financially well-off and politically well-connected society man. Manuel expresses a sense of dislocation as he realizes that the Irigoyen name in La Paz has lost much of its prestige as a result of the political exile and the loss of the family's wealth. He knows that they must now make way for the influx of new money in paceña society, stating that "Aunque . . . estaba lejos de compartir las ideas tremendistas de su padre presentía que su familia como tantas otras se consumiría inexorablemente dando paso a las insurgentes capas sociales que emergían voraces" (76). The chance encounter with Jimmy Perreira comes at a time when Bolivian society as a whole is undergoing a restructuring brought about by political and economic instability. As evidenced by the Irigoyen's, the emerging "new money" families threaten to eliminate the influence of the traditional oligarchy.[29]

Recognizing his friend's predicament, Jimmy Perreira presents Manuel with two options for employment. First, Perreira can use his contacts to secure Irigoyen a position as a customs agent on the border, where he'll make a lot of money off of bribes. However, he will have to spend about a year at this hardship post to secure a good sum of money. The other option is much more straightforward; transport packages of cocaine to

[29] Originally published in 1980, *La mala sombra* depicts the time of the Bánzer dictatorship and all of the political cronyism and corruption that dominated the capital of La Paz. Just one year after the publication of the novel, in late 1980, a coup headed by General Garcia Meza would occur. The novel not only reflects on the impact of Bánzer's dictatorship, but also seems to foreshadow the marriage of cocaine trafficking and government which would occur with Garcia Meza. For more insight, see Francisco Thoumi's *Illegal Drugs, Economy, and Society in the Andes*.

the United States (105 – 106). The two options presented by Perreira reveal that the link between narcotrafficking and politics will only grow stronger and that illicit business has become entrenched in the political culture. While both provide the opportunity for earning "easy money," presented with little risk to Irigoyen and the mention of danger discarded, only that of a drug courier assures "fast money." The pressures of risk and wealth cannot be understated in this situation. At this historical moment, transporting packages of cocaine in one's luggage was a common form of trafficking.[30] Irigoyen's educated, white, middle upper appearance further mitigates this risk, as his professional demeanor make him seem unassuming to American customs agents. The conflict between the monies – easy versus fast – helps to lessen the risk further, as either decision results in financial gain. Before accepting, Irigoyen experiences a process of introspection; he visits his father and sees how deteriorated his life has become in his old age, a visit with an old colleague and fellow revolutionary reminds him how futile his profession has become, the lack of his own space in his mother-in-law's home and inability to provide for his family drives him to consider suicide. In essence, all of the relationships from his past that could provide some sense of honor and prestige are gone. His inability to find meaning in the social space he inhabits or change the circumstances of his financial support creates a sense of urgency in the decision. Only then does he reconsider Perreira's offer and calls to announce his acceptance of the "fast money" option. In summary, Manuel Irigoyen accesses the opportunity to enter the cocaine trade through an intimate, personal connection from his own social class. The changes that occur in Manuel upon assuming this new role will be addressed in the subsequent section.

[30] For more on this early style of trafficking, see Bruce Porter's *Blow* (2001), a non-fiction account of George Jung's rise to fame as one of Pablo Escobar's main traffickers in the United States.

Jonás Larriva's initiation into the drug trade must be examined as a function of the conflicting relationship that his father-in-law Patroclo del Paso y Troncoso, creates with the growing influence of pichicateros in Santa Cruz.[31] Therefore, it is best to begin by highlighting how Patroclo changes from being an entrepreneur to working with the pichicateros. As a traditional patriarch, Patroclo assumes the responsibility of providing for the family, including the ever-unemployed Jonás Larriva, but the changing economic conditions of the time (1987) make of this a challenging endeavor:

> …La carne que comíamos se originaba del frigorífico particular de él. La carnicería era su más flamante actividad comercial. Negocio que, por considerarlo poco chic, jamás lo mencionaba. El dividía los trabajos en finos y plebeyos. Durante toda la vida se dedico al cultivo de la caña y la importación de electrodomésticos. Pero la crisis económica desangró a estas empresas. A la vez, los campesinos abandonaron los sembradíos para pisar coca a los narcotraficantes. La recesión obligó a Patroclo a invertir en el único sector que rendía: el abastecimiento alimentario. (29)

Patroclo's commercial success, the source of personal pride and justification for his social status, is put into jeopardy by the Bolivian economic crisis, as the workforce he exploited to maintain his agricultural success is increasingly drawn to the allure of the growing narcoeconomy leaving him without a base of labor. He is forced to engage in less glamorous forms of commerce (opening grocery stores) to maintain the family's wealth. Again, Patroclo is subject to the pressures of the Bolivian masculine mandate, where he must use his commercial dominance to provide for his family, even in lean

[31] In Bolivian Spanish, this is a derogatory term to refer to a drug trafficker.

times. In the household, he is driven by the socially accepted role of the Bolivian male, chastising the traffickers who seek easy money and praising his own hard work. He must maintain the family's name and social class by providing the financial support needed to maintain the life-style of an upper middle class cruceño family.[32]

Montes Vanucci narrates the family's decadence using humor. Patroclo's family comes from a lineage that doesn't exist, which has no family honor. His is the story of the Bolivian self-made man. The failure of his agricultural endeavors and the need to resort to lesser means of income (i.e. a butcher shop), emphasize the fact that he is not part of Santa Cruz's landed elite. Patroclo's moral narrative of his pursuit of riches, reinforcing his business savvy, form part of Montes Vanucci's commentary on the arbitrariness of the moral distinctions of wealth in cruceño society. The pichicateros' growth in illicit business incites rage and scorn among the middle class, while Patroclo's exploitation of his farm workers doesn't even raise an eyebrow. His desire to get rich at any cost is socially and morally acceptable by the middle class, while the pichicateros' same desire is met with outright rejection.

What results is a harsh, yet hilarious interpretation of Patroclo's position in Santa Cruz society, where he is presented as a caricature of a scorned patriarch desperately trying to cling to a social order that slips further out of reach with each passing day. The natural target for his scorn is, of course, the new sector of society which he feels most threatening to his livelihood and moral values; the narcotraffickers. Patroclo vehemently declares, "Mis archienemigos son los pichicateros . . . Me robaron la gloria" (74). The resentment he feels stems from the fact that he was only able to overcome his humble beginnings through a lifetime of working, but that younger generations willing to gamble

[32] The term *cruceño* refers to someone from Santa Cruz.

in the drug business are able to surpass his wealth in a matter of months (74). As a form of revenge, Patroclo insists on preventing their access to his world in any way possible: he criticizes the influx of Mercedes Benz, gold chains, and private planes into Santa Cruz, chastises the corruption of the nation's beauty pageants as the daughter's of the narcos begin winning competitions, and denies them membership into the social club he attends. As a final insult, he commissions the construction of an Egyptian pyramid which will serve as the family mausoleum, proving the point that "Los pichicateros saben vivir, se dan más gustos que el Zar de las Rusias . . . Mucho más difícil es morir. Sólo aprenden a morir regiamente los aristócratas espirituales. Yo soy un aristócrata espiritual" (77). At this point, Patroclo's posturing begins to reveal the truly sad economic state of a family – and a class – in decline and a refusal to accept new relations of power.

In describing the growth of "la fracción burguesa" in the business structure of the cocaine trade during this time, Hugo Rodas Morales notes that "los miembros de la cocaína boliviana desarrollaron formas de legitimación social a través de su importancia económica en la localidad en que se establecieron" (229).[33] As Rodas Morales notes, the "pichicateros" implant themselves in Patroclo's society and seek to gain legitimacy through the influence of their growing wealth. Fittingly, two events occur in Patroclo's life that causes him to subsequently embrace the new sector of society. The first is that he is declared bankrupt, thus putting the completion of his pyramid on hiatus and the livelihood of the family in danger. The second is that his daughter Julia returns from her studies in the US with a new boyfriend, Grigotá, the son of one of the city's well-known narcotraffickers, Chico Lindo. Patroclo's initial reaction to the later is predictable; he

[33] Morales, Hugo Rodas. *Huanchaca: Modelo empresarial de la cocaína en Bolivia*. La Paz: Plural Editores, 1996. Print.

forbids Julia from seeing Grigotá and prohibits him from coming to the house. In an attempt to help his heartbroken son, however, Chico Lindo pays a visit to Patroclo at home, this encounter will change the patriarch's world forever. After meeting in private with Chico Lindo, Patroclo emerges completely transformed, granting his blessings for his daughter to continue her relationship and recanting his initial hatred for the narcos. He reveals that:

> …la deshonestidad de los pichcateros no era contagiosa . . .[y] no contaminaba ni siquiera los dólares de los traficantes; las personas de bien podrían manipular, usar ese dinero en negocios particulares, prestarlo, hacerlo crecer con total inmunidad. Patroclo aprendió que se puede permanecer honrado conviviendo, asociándose, estableciendo lazos sanguíneos con la ilegalidad. (296)

Here, Patroclo sees his acceptance of the drug money (and Chico Lindo) as an opportunity to put ill-gotten funds to work in ways that will benefit the economy and reestablish his family honor, in essence, serving as a moral money laundering agent. It is later revealed that with this help, he is able to get out of bankruptcy and complete the family pyramid. Again, the force of the narrative comes from the use of humor in expressing Patroclo's sudden change of heart regarding the pichicateros. While superficially it appears that Patroclo is simply appeasing his daughter's romantic whim and acting out his responsibility as a member of "las personas de bien" to guide the deeds of the less cultured pichicateros, what has actually occurred is a personal exchange which initiates Patroclo into the drug trade.

More importantly, the marriage is a way for both Patroclo and Chico Lindo to solidify their status as upper middle class. Patroclo's crisis in the middle class is obvious;

he lacks the financial security to maintain the life-style he has created for his family and access to Chico Lindo's wealth can resolve this. However, Chico Lindo also stands to benefit from his son's marriage, as the union will provide legitimate access to an upper middle class standing. Montes Vanucci playfully presents Chico Lindo's narrative as a series of cultural and social symbols. This starts with the game of names occurring in the story. Chico Lindo, or Pretty Boy, is a quintessential gangster's name, a nickname with no origin, harkening back to the image of the infamous American bank robber Pretty Boy Floyd. While perfectly acceptable in the world of the narcos, where nicknames and anonymity of origin are of benefit, the cruceño middle class is frightened by this lack of lineage. Conscious of this, Chico Lindo names his son Grigotá, which was the original, indigenous name of the city of Santa Cruz before the arrival of the Spanish colonizers.[34] Through this name, Chico Lindo establishes a false lineage for his son Grigotá, symbolically linking his family to the city's colonial period and the European settlers, and subverting his father's lack of social origin. To complement this, Chico Lindo sends Grigotá to study at an American university, thus granting him the educational capital needed to establish a strong cultural origin in society. The fact that Grigotá studies at an American university is significant for two reasons. First, it is a display of wealth, as university fees for a foreign student to attend a university in the U.S. during the time of hyper-inflation described in the novel were simply impossible for the average middle class family to afford. Secondly, the fact that the university is in the U.S. and not in Bolivia, or even Latin America, is a way of assuring that Grigotá's educational capital will not be subject to any scrutiny, as the American university and educational system

[34] I credit Joshua D. Kirshner's "City profile: Santa Cruz de la Sierra" for providing this information regarding the original name of the city. Kirshner, Joshua D. "City profile: Santa Cruz de la Sierra." *Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning* 31 (2013) 544 – 552. Online. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264275111001697

were seen as the gold standard when compared to Bolivia at the time. Chico Lindo uses the money from the drug trade to set up his family's entrance into the Bolivian upper middle class. The final step is to marry his son into a family who is already part of that class, thus securing his and his family's new status.

The wedding itself can be read as a moment of exchange. In her seminal essay, "The Traffic in Women," Gayle Rubin studies this exchange within what she calls sex/gender systems, where the "gift" of women in traditional marriages works to establish kinship networks.[35] The sex/gender system at work between Patroclo, Chico Lindo and Julia is Bolivian patriarchy. The negotiation of the relationship between Grigotá and Julia serves as an example of what Rubin terms the political economy of sex. To understand the exchange of women, Rubin explains that it is necessary to see marriage as not simply a means of establishing personal relationships, but as part of a larger social exchange:

> In short, there are other questions to ask of a marriage system than whether or not it exchanges women. Is the woman traded for a woman, or is there an equivalent? Is this equivalent only for women, or can it be turned into something else? . . . On the other hand, can bridewealth be obtained only in marital exchange, or can it be obtained from elsewhere? Can women be accumulated through amassing wealth? . . . These last questions point to another task for a political economy of sex.

[35] Rubin explains that "Every society also has a sex/gender system – a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner, no matter how bizarre some of the conventions may be" (32). Rubin engages concepts of kinship from Lévi-Strauss' *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, while also criticizing Freud's work on the subject. For this study, Rubin's essay comes by way of its reproduction in Linda Nicholson's *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory* (1997).

> Kinship and marriage are always part of total social systems, and are always tied into economic and political arrangements. (56)

Julia's economic value is equivalent to Chico Lindo's drug wealth. By maintaining a relationship with Grigotá, Julia ensures a continuous flow of income for Patroclo and gives the narcos her status. In this capacity, she provides financial salvation for her family. Chico Lindo profits socially, as he gains access to a legitimate, established family in the high society of Santa Cruz. Patroclo compromises his initial judgment of the pichicateros by entering into a pact with them, essentially becoming one himself through his role as a destination for the drug money. With all parties in the exchange satisfied, the new kinship system rests on the basis of a new set of morals, in which the top priority is the accumulation of money. Money and Julia are the two factors which allow for this kinship to develop in the cruceño middle class. The personal bond between Julia and Grigotá is also what brings Patroclo into the fold of the pichicatero.

For Jonás Larriva, the process of entering the drug trade is more direct and personal. Throughout the novel, Jonás' lack of ambition casts him as the antihero in the work. He shows no motivation to better his employment situation or to contribute to the betterment of his family. After witnessing the loss of his lover and the subsequent moral and ethical corruption of his wife's families when offered access to limitless funds of the drug trade, Jonás criticizes them for selling out. Initially hoping that they will see the error of their ways, he soon realizes that they are too far gone (306 – 307). Consequently, this realization prompts him to action for the first time in his life and, in confronting his personal problem, formulates that the solution is to follow suit and make his own fortune transporting cocaine (307). This provides an interesting juncture of social and personal masculine identities. Throughout the work, Jonás shows no desire to

assume the socially defined masculine role in the family unit. He does not want to work or support his family. Yet when his personal masculine identity is threatened by the loss of his lover, he reacts and attempts to salvage both identities. The threat to his virility seems to be the only force strong enough to prompt change in the protagonist.

Access to the trafficking side of the business is simplified, as Jonás recalls that "Para concretar mi proyecto necesitaba que un traficante me contratara. Pensé en Antonio Extremadura. Interesante pájaro, Antonio Extremadura. Fuimos compañeros en la escuela . . . Un mono ejemplar. Estudió economía en los Estados Unidos. Apareció años después enredado en el tráfico de cocaína" (308). Like Manuel Irigoyen, the opportunity to enter this world comes in the form of a childhood friend. When the family cannot offer resolution for Jonás, he seeks out his personal networks. Though his time as a drug mule is short-lived, the act of re-establishing a relationship with Antonio Extramadura is doubly important to Jonás. First, the planning and enactment of his personal goal marks a growing self-confidence in the protagonist that will become necessary at the end of the novel. Second, the initiation into the drug business marks his assimilation into the new model of the middle class, as one of the narcotraffickers he encounters share a similar personal history to his and inhabit the same social spaces as he does. This reveals that increasing numbers of the cruceño middle class are drawn to the drug business for financial benefit and are now accepting of the presence of these narcos in their social category. In brief, the various initiations that occur in the novel emphasize how personal exchanges are made to maintain a semblance of social order but, in doing so, compromise moral and ethical boundaries.

Like a brewing storm, the professional dissatisfaction and longing for financial success Luis expresses in *Cartas cruzadas* slowly cloud his thoughts and, through the observations of Raquel and Esteban, a distinct rift in his normally reserved demeanor

emerges. But before Luis is allowed to abandon his responsibilities as a professor, two concurrent narratives of transformation in the novel must meet; the metamorphosis of Medellín and the metamorphosis of Luis himself. The tale of the city is that of Esteban. As a local reporter, he is connected to the pulse of the city, able to perceive and describe the subtlest disturbances. In one of his initial observations in 1972, Esteban describes to Luis the historical and economical dislocation of the city, explaining that "Ya no es el epicentro agrícola que fue en la colonia, ni la pequeña ciudad de mineros o cafetaleros prósperos, ni la de instalaciones industriales para cobertura del mercado nacional. Ya nadie que quiera poner una fábrica piensa en Medellín" (Agudelo 81). The landowning Antioquian oligarchy is being displaced along with the traditional sources of wealth. Esteban goes on to describe how the primary inhabitants of the dying city, consisting of the future new rich, the new rich, and the new rich in decline, will be able to survive for only one generation (81). Almost prophetic, he inadvertently describes Luis' later actions in the novel, stating ". . . no falta el niñito bien que intente recuperar el honor perdido, enteramente fincado en la riqueza, llevándose una libra de coca para Miami" (81). It is important to note that, unlike the men described by Esteban in this passage, Luis is not a "niñito bien" who comes from a wealthy family, but instead grows up in a lower socio-economic class and is raised by a single mother. Still, unbeknown to Esteban, he not only predicts Luis' decision to turn to narcotrafficking, but also acts as the catalyst for this decision.

An important element in Esteban's scrutiny of the city is the presence of gossip to provide a compliment to the narration of change. Again in 1972, the gossip exchanged between Luis and Esteban regarding the arrest of a common childhood friend, Ricitos, in Miami for drug trafficking incorporates the presence of the drug trade into the story of the city (89). These types of comments perform more than just a spectacular function by

showing a scandal. Instead, they serve as a cautionary element in the narrative. This is the case with the story of Raquel's father, Don Rafa, which is told first to Claudia (Raquel's sister who lives in New York) and later to Esteban. As the story goes, while vacationing with his daughters at the family farm, a Mercedes Benz drives up and a well-dressed young man emerges from the vehicle. Upon greeting Don Rafa, the young man shows interest in the land and proceeds to ask the value. Don Rafa casually makes an estimate, without giving much serious thought as to the young man's intentions. The young man immediately replies that he will pay ten times that amount. When Don Rafa attempts to explain that his price was not meant as an offer, the young man simply replies that a price was given, he made a counteroffer, and he considered the matter closed (205 – 206). The property, having been in the family for generations, is abruptly sold. What this interaction illustrates is the impact that the growing drug trade has on day-to-day experience in Medellín.

These stories then circulate, not in the press, but rather in the form of gossip. The social changes brought forth by the drug trade also change the way people interact with one another, rupturing old bonds and creating a crisis of traditional relationships. In one way, the scene describes the usurpation of the traditional landowning class in Medellín by the new social agents of the drug trade. Previously, lineage, tradition, and family wealth brokered landowning rights between gentlemen to maintain class and status. In the Medellín of the 1970s, the influx of narcodollars trumps these requisites. Money affects and changes the way the social classes in Medellín interact, either by consent or by force, becoming one of the primary motivators for new negotiations of power and relationships. The desire for property in this scene is equally important because (like Chico Lindo in Bolivia) the young man's aggressive purchase of the property is a push to assert the dominance of his money in determining his new social class. The dialogue between Don

Rafa and the young man exemplifies symbolic capital, in that "the accumulation of economic capital merges with the accumulation of symbolic capital, that is, with the acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability that are easily converted into political positions" (Bourdieu 291). The power the young man exercises over Don Rafa in the negotiation is not one of brute force or direct threat, but rather the understanding between the two that the young man pertains to a business that will bring great harm to Don Rafa should he decide not to comply with the young man's wishes. In this case, the young man belongs to a business in which violence is the norm. He manipulates Don Rafa's fear of this violence to gain the economic capital he seeks, which he can later turn into honour and respectability. These are the types of relationships that define the new Medellín in 1975. Yet the situation intensifies as the trade becomes more prevalent. By 1978, Esteban describes how "Nunca antes se vieron tantas, tan cuantiosas y tan instantáneas fortunas como hoy en día aquí. Una cosa que comenzó como un contrabando de aprendices se convirtió – en términos económicos – en el cambio más transcendental de la economía antioqueña desde la industrialización" (284). Whereas Don Rafa shows reservations when confronted with the opportunity to deal with a narco, by 1978, the popular opinion seems to go in the opposite direction, with citizens clamoring to cash in on the boom. Just as the gradual change in Medellín culminates in this final rush, Luis' process of change reaches its peak the moment when he decides to enter the drug business.

For most of the novel, Luis' primary aspiration in life is to get paid to read and analyze literature at the university. Yet this endeavor only carries him so far, as his story eventually reaches a breaking point. As the previous section highlights, one element that influences his tale is the spread and influence of the drug trade in the city of Medellín. An indicator of this change that reaches Luis personally is the confirmation of Pelusa's

involvement, Luis' brother-in-law. Having known Pelusa since childhood, it was generally understood that the source of his family's wealth was the family mechanic and auto parts shop. Yet in a conversation with Esteban, Pelusa explains that "A esto de reparar carros hay que añadirle el comercio internacional. Y, a ratos, me comprendes, el contrabandito" (270). To Esteban, and anyone else conscious of the situation in Medellín, it is obvious that the only type of contraband capable of producing the funds needed to pay for Pelusa's Mercedes is cocaine. Like a virus, this bit of information begins infiltrating Luis' mind. However, he is not motivated to seek out Pelusa until after one of Esteban's visits to New York.[36]

In this instance, Esteban, who comes from a wealthy family and whose personal wealth was greatly increased through his inheritance, treats everyone to a weekend of extravagance.[37] They stay at the most expensive hotel, purchase gourmet meals, and indulge in extravagant shopping. This weekend of excess exposes Luis to the "país de las maravillas" which was, until that point inaccessible to him. In this situation, Luis possesses the appropriate cultural origin to access this level of wealth, but lacks the financial merit to justify remaining in this class. The luxury and extravagance of Estaban's stay in New York present a life-style that is unknown to Luis, who has been surviving off of a minimal salary from his studies and teaching. This crisis of life-style is, at its core, a crisis of social origin and capital, where Luis realizes that he is ill-prepared to maintain the taste and life-style of consumer excess present in this upper social class.

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[36] With the permission of his university, Luis had accepted an invitation to complete graduate studies in New York (208). He and Raquel spend much of their free time with Claudia, Raquel's sister.

[37] The "everyone" in this case includes Luis, Raquel, Claudia, Claudia's son Boris, and Claudia's girlfriend Juana.

As a result, Raquel notices a marked change in her husband, stating "Luis se volvió codicioso. El dinero se convirtió en algo suma e inesperadamente esencial en la vida . . . Desde entonces, Luis no quiso seguir siendo pobre. Él tenía que levantar dinero" (245). Further fueling this desire is the professional frustration he feels upon returning to Colombia and being subject to repayment of the loans he received while abroad. The desperation of wanting to quickly eliminate his financial obligation to the university, and the idea that money can solve all problems, lead him to accept an offer from Pelusa to launder money for his organization. The changes documented in the city of Medellín provide the conditions for Pelusa to enter the drug business. The personal crisis Luis undergoes upon returning from New York provides the necessary justification for him to risk his life and personal relationships to resolve his perceived hardship. The in-law relationship between Pelusa and Luis provides the bond needed to facilitate Luis' initiation into the illicit business.

Ricardo Laverde's initiation differs slightly from the abovementioned examples in that his liason does not result from a childhood friend with a similar socio-economic background, but rather a personal connection by way of his wife Elena Fritts. This occurs when Fritts' former Peace Corps trainer, Mike Barbieri, comes to visit for the holidays. After spending Christmas together and establishing a friendship, Ricardo tells his wife about his new job opportunity with Mike, stating "Ricardo le tenía la noticia: le habían conseguido un trabajo, se iba a tener que ausentar un par de días. Se trataba de traer unos televisores de San Andrés, nada más simple, pero iba a tener que dormir en destino" (Vásquez 180). Though it is later revealed that Ricardo was not delivering television sets, but instead bales of marijuana, he becomes an integral, and in some senses founding, member of the network Mike Barbieri creates. Ricardo later explains Barbieri's project:

> Les había enseñado cosas a los campesinos. Junto con otros voluntarios versados en agricultura, les había enseñado técnicas, donde sembrar mejor para que las montañas protejan las matas, qué fertilizante usar, cómo separar los machos de las hembras. Y ahora, bueno, ahora tenía contactos en diez o quince hectáreas regadas da aquí a Medellín, y era capaz unos cuatrocientos kilos por cosecha. (185)

The irony of the Peace Corp volunteers using their training in agriculture and rural development, which were part of the American neoliberal project for Latin America, to build up an illicit business of drug production and trafficking is irrefutable. Yet this detail emphasizes the unique historical moment when Ricardo encounters the drug trade. The Colombian drug trade revolved around the production, transportation, and distribution of marijuana, during a historical period (1970s) when American consumption and demand for the product was growing. The business seemed to be safe and very profitable, making the decision to participate easy for Laverde. However, as the trade shifted to the transport of cocaine, this peace was lost as the increased profitability of this drug also signaled an increased use of violence to ensure that the business grew and remained profitable. This is not to say that there was no violence present in the marijuana trade. Violent conflict for control over territories of production and distribution existed in the early 1970s. However, the spike in the demand for cocaine in the US made trafficking cocaine the preferred drug trade. Laverde's services as a smuggling pilot, well developed during the boom of the marijuana trade, become indispensable to the cocaine cartels, thus trapping him in the new cycle of violence which emerges in Colombia.

As this section shows, access to the middle space of the drug trade is mediated by personal connections. These connections are easily located within the protagonists own social class and community, highlighting a changing dynamic between the drug trade and the traditional social structures in the novels represented in this chapter. The decision to seek out these connections is rooted in an economic crisis that threatens the life-style and livelihood of the protagonist. Once initiated into the business, however, the middleman must commit to effectively performing his role in these new businesses and obey the code of this business.

BEING BUSINESSMEN

As professors and teachers, the protagonists could be described as gentlemen or (gentle)men. Upon making the decision to participate in the drug trade, however, the gentlemen must conform to a new series of behaviors and codes, in essence, adapt to a new set of behaviors. In examining how the protagonists transition into their new roles as middlemen, it is useful to recall Deleuze's and Guatarri's conception of humans as desiring-machines within a capitalist system, as outlined in *Anti-Oedipus*. Deleuze and Guatarri explain that, "Desiring-machines are binary machines, obeying a binary law or set of rules governing associations: one machine is always coupled with another. The productive synthesis, the production of production, is inherently connective in nature: 'and …' 'and then…'" (5). Not only are the machines interconnected, but they rely on one another to continue producing, interrupting each other to draw energy. There is a perpetuation in their formation, the ever-present "and / and then" expecting another component to link in at any time. Again, the concept of constant movement is crucial, as the machines never stand still but are in constant activity.

The world of narcotrafficking follows a set-up similar to Deleuze's and Guatarri's machines with regard to several aspects, chief among them the conditions of constant (re)production and motion. However, the machines in this context also hold several other characteristics that make them an original construction. Rossana Reguillo advances a novel application of the concept of Deleuze's and Guatarri's machines to narcotrafficking, in particular to the violence surrounding the trade, in her term "narco-machine". For instance, in her essay, "The Narco-Machine and the Work of Violence: Notes Toward its Decodification," Reguillo notes that in the narco-machine, one of the many "powers" of this production mechanisms is "The dissolution of the person is the narco-machine's first victory" (n.p.). This victory has to do with the power to overcome a person's moral and ethical reservations through the influence of money or violence. The "dissolution of the person" comes from the new participant's acceptance of the drug trade's emphasis on making money. Through its structure and its never-ending capacity to continually produce capital, the narco-machine could be viewed as the ultimate capitalist machine. The goal of all of the smaller machines which compose it (i.e. people who work in and for the trade) is to continue the flow of drugs to the market and ensure the flow of capital back to the machine.

In becoming businessmen and entering the middle space of the drug trade, the protagonists in the novels are absorbed into this structure of power and must obey the new codes, thus becoming narco-machines themselves. While all of the smaller narco-machines answer to the dominant code of capital production, they also have specialized roles which intersect and digress from one another. The middleman, when acting as an agent of money laundering or sale of cocaine, is unique as a narco-machine because of his close proximity to large amounts of money. The sicario uses violence to ensure that his or her machine runs as expected, but is connected to the middleman through the

money that is paid for this service. Likewise, the capo or drug boss administers the sale and purchase of cocaine as well as the application of political influence, yet is heavily reliant on the middleman – either as a drug producer, money launderer, pilot, or any other middle role in the trade – to ensure the flow of money throughout the organization. While the narco-machine of the middleman may not be one directly using violence to resolve conflicts and influence outsiders, it is still affected by these actions and, in some way, supports it.

Cartas cruzadas' Esteban describes this process of integration best by observing that upon entering the trade, "Sin darte cuenta, en algún momento, sin proponértelo, ya perteneces a un sistema de lealtades y de apoyos y de formas de vida en que eres parte del engranaje y no puedes retirar por eso, porque afectarías los intereses de los otros" (315). As with all machines, it is impossible to remove a component without affecting some other component, meaning there is no conceivable escape. This is the power of maintaining the narco-machine invisible from the authorities and the populace, either through bribery or intimidation; by avoiding spectacular displays of violence and continuing to function as relatively normal and integrated members of society, the middlemen can continue to function indefinitely. It is important for the middlemen to remain more invisible than the capos and the killers in order to be successful in their role. This is not only done out of discretion, but also because by remaining invisible the middleman can generate larger sums of money for the organization. More to the point, they are driven by the same underlying desire as the capos and the killers, the desire for money. Invisibility becomes a special condition for the functioning of this particular narco-machine, but the goal of generation and accumulation of capital is the same for all of the narco-machines. The middlemen's reputations as professors automatically integrate them into society while their family names serve to justify and mask their

sudden growing wealth. In this sense, the middlemen attain Bourdieu's symbolic capital created by the individual's cultural and social origin, a value which allows them to navigate this middle space maintaining silence and invisibility. The threat of elimination, or "component replacement," is enough to prevent betrayal and ensure continued operation.

Cars, apartments, trips abroad, are just a few of the elements which highlight the consumerism which forms part of the life-style of the newly formed business men in the novels. The increasing need to purchase items and display the newly gotten wealth gains new meaning through Viviana Zelizer's conception of the social meaning of money, in which she states that, ". . . people are constantly creating new monies, and they do so by segregating different streams of legal tender into funds for distinct activities and relations . . . People also mark moral boundaries among categories of money: consider the variable meanings of 'dirty' money, 'easy' money, or 'blood' money. People often 'launder' dubious earnings by making donations to charity or other morally cleansing destinations" (Zelizer 89 - 90).38 One such "morally cleansing destination" comes in the form of a home purchase. Luis attempts to make amends with Raquel after having lied to her about his initial collaboration with Pelusa by purchasing her a new apartment in Bogotá. He does the same for his mother. Unfortunately, both acts are rejected by the intended recipients, thus nullifying his attempts to rebuild confidence. Likewise, one of Ricardo Laverde's first purchases is the property in La Dorada for Elena Fritts. In this case, she accepts and they begin raising their family there, thus legitimizing both the purchase and the money used in the transaction. In both examples, the protagonists face the unintended side effect of their success in the business; an excess of dirty money. Following the

[38] Zelizer, Viviana A. "The Social Meaning of Money." *Economic Lives: How Culture Shapes the Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011. 89 – 163.

greed and consumerism resulting from their work as middlemen, they then try to cleanse their funds through family purchases.

This presents a paradox with regard to purchase decisions and sources of funds. Luis possesses the educational and cultural capital to assert his standing in the upper middle class and now possesses the financial stability to make purchases that reflect the social taste of this class. However, the sources of his funds are criminal in nature. He needs to purchases to confirm his arrival into this social class that is above the class of his origin. In examining taste as a function of the legitimate and personal domains of culture, and social and educational capital as influencing purchase decisions, Bourdieu's critique fails to account for how the sources of wealth can also impact such decisions. With the spending habits of the middlemen, in particular, it becomes necessary to examine purchases before and after their involvement in the drug trade. The source of money used for these differing purchases either reveal attempts at financial moral cleansing, as is the case with Luis' home purchases, or reinforce the process of maintaining class distinctions.

It becomes apparent that this consumerist posturing – the multiple purchases of homes or the extravagant spending abroad – is really an attempt to assume their new life-style, where "Life-styles are thus the systematic products of habitus, which, perceived in their mutual relations through the schemes of the habitus, become sign systems that are socially qualified (as 'distinguished', 'vulgar', etc.)" (Bourdieu 172). Instead of habitus, it is the protagonists' behaviors that reinforce the assumption of a new life-style and all of the socially qualified signs associated with it. Under these conditions, the middleman's work in narcotrafficking should be socially (and perhaps morally) criticized for forming part of an illegal and violent criminal organization. However, the invisibility of the middleman's role prevents social judgment and negative classification from occurring.

Instead of assuming the life-style of a narco, with all of the conditions and dangers that this carries, the middleman can instead assume the life-style of an affluent member of his social class. Yet there is a trap in this life-style as well. Due to this affluence, the middleman cannot return to his life as a common professor or as a back-woods pilot. He is now a part of the New Rich sector of society, which he previously despised. He is a cog in the narco-machine and must dress the part and act the part, even if this consists of staying out of sight. An signifying element of the narco-machine is purchasing power, and the middleman must live up to and embellish this standard. So, Luis must buy apartments, Patroclo must build his pyramid-mausoleum, Manuel Irigoyen must move out of Doña Inés' house, Ricardo Laverde must buy a jeep for Elaine Fritts, and Jonás must study photography in New York. Failure to assume this impulses would signify a lack of adherence to the code of the machine. The fallacy of the the narco-machine which catches the middleman is that it does not only require its components to constantly produce, but also to consume and be consumed.

CONCLUSION

In closing this discussion of the middlemen, I would like to summarize some important elements about the construction of these characters. First, their turn towards narcotrafficking is an act of freewill. All of the protagonists studied in this chapter enjoyed the safety and financial security of legitimate employment prior to their involvement in drug trafficking. They are, in many senses, workers and citizens of their cities. However, the conditions that set up this decision center on a perceived threat to their social class arising from the growing authority of the drug trade. In Bolivia, there is an economic crisis that threatens the hegemony of a high class, who, out of self-interest and a desire to maintain their status, choose to deal the narcos. In Colombia, the growth

of the drug trade itself creates a new class of citizens who want to usurp the traditional landowning elite, using the money and influence created by the trade. The allure of the money and social access created by the trade is strong enough to convince people who have legitimate jobs to abandon their professions and enter the trade seeking fortune and a change in social status. Beyond the scope of this chapter, it is possible to take up the discussion of the construction of the social roles themselves and the gender expectations for these roles in relation to the conditions set forth by the drug trade. There is space for further analysis of the gender construction of the middleman, with particular attention to the man of letters involved in crime, in relation to the social pressures expected of this role.

Second, the middleman's entrance into the narcotrafficking is only possible through close, personal contacts, in many cases through people from their own socio-economic class. Without these contacts, it is possible to assert that they might have never been presented with the opportunity to profit from the trade. However, access can be dependent on the establishment of new, stronger familial ties. To extend this analysis, it is possible to perform an additional reading of this entrance by focusing on the creation of the personal contacts themselves, from the perspective of kinship. Either through marriage or common histories, the kinships present in the novels reinforce many of the socially mandated gender roles of the societies presented. They also emphasize an additional facet of the perpetuation and production paradigm of the machine complex discussed in the chapter.

Third, in assuming the role of the middleman the protagonist must change to fit his new role. The new life-style carries with it a new behavior and worldview. Whether through a change in behavior or integration into the narco-machine, the driving force of the narratives is this behavioral transformation of the protagonists with regard to wealth.

The stories of the middlemen show the creation of a new moral value imposed by the money of the drug trade. The middlemen conform to this moral standard and fully integrate themselves into the consumption machine perpetuated by an endless illegal market of narcotrafficking.

Map 1: Map of Bolivia. Source – Perry Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin. Public domain. Available online <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/bolivia_pol93.jpg>

Map 2: Map of Colombia. Source – Google Maps. Public domain. Available online. <https://www.google.com/maps/place/South+America/@7.3323102,-69.537155,7z/data=!4m2!3m1!1s0x9409341c355d34b5:0x69d40ccfc9c6e32b?hl=en>

CHAPTER 2: REMAPPING THE BRAZILIAN NARCOSPHERE

The following chapter examines the representation of national borders in recent Brazilian novels portraying the world of the drug trade. Borrowing from border studies, particularly those examining the US-Mexico border, the chapter to explores the broader relationships occurring between characters and their surroundings at local and national levels. The border, viewed as a space of transnational contact and confrontation, carries complex cultural, political, and economic exchanges. As a way of better understanding the postmodern, perpetual state of change experienced by contemporary society, studies of spatiality have garnered increased attention not only in the study of literature but also across the humanities.[39] While traditional borders and barriers have become less fixed, and even the concept of temporality has been altered by ever-advancing developments in technology, as Pablo Vila observes, the study of border spaces has become an essential tool for deciphering the circuits, which envelop our world, revealing as much information about identities formed away from the border as those formed on the border.[40]

By incorporating the study of borders into the textual analysis of Brazilian novels representing narcotics trafficking, specifically Rubem Fonseca's *A grande arte* (1983), Patrícia Melo's *Ladrão de cadáveres* (2010), and Marçal Aquino's *Cabeça a prêmio* (2003), the chapter goes beyond the question of geographic visibility/invisibility of these spaces in literary production to also examine the cultural and social impact of the drug

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[39] Spanning the last forty years, scholars who have contributed to this turn towards spatiality include Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, Edward Soja, and Mike Davis, just to name a few.

[40] Vila, Pablo. *Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders: Social Categories, Metaphors, and Narrative Identities on the U.S. – Mexico Frontier*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000. Print

trade on the national imaginary. The tensions highlighted between urban and rural environments, along with the construction of geopolitical frontier spaces, emphasize relationships of power, revealing the workings of empire in the 21st century. What results is a remapping of space beyond the physical or geographical location of an illicit business to include a re-conceptualization of the institutional framework that supports and perpetuates narcotrafficking in the case of Brazil.

The novels examine the drug trade as it occurs outside of the nation's iconic metropolises of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The reader is forced to embark on a journey into the interior, to the marshy Pantanal region of the nation's western borders. In these works, the image of the border city serves to link the often disparate sites of production and distribution of drugs found in mainstream media and broaden the perspective regarding the true expanse of the business. A twenty-year gap between the two literary representations of the border city of Corumbá in *A grande arte* and *Ladrão de cadáveres* relocates the frontier city as a central node in a transnational narcogeography. Additionally, Marçal Aquino's *Cabeça a prêmio* uses a vindictive manhunt across both land and air to reveal the expansive network of corruption and power created by the drug trade throughout the small, interior towns of Brazil's Central-West and North regions, located along the border. Here, a seemingly limitless Pantanal landscape is traversed by violent gateways of power established by the narcotics trade. By engaging these outer, national limits, all three novels represent a departure from the authors' characteristic uses of urban environments in their works. They instead push to the edge of the modern conception of the Brazilian nation, the space of transition, to

reveal the extent to which the drug trade in Brazil is capable of generating an encompassing complex of corruption and criminal impunity.

STUDIES AT THE BORDER

In examining the formation and significance of borders in these novels, the following analysis relies upon the work of sociologist Pablo Vila and his comprehensive study of border relations in the U.S. and Mexico between the cities of El Paso and Juarez published in 2000, *Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders*. Within this context, Vila shows the complex, simultaneous processes of identity construction and recognition of a symbolic "other" occurring along the border, negotiating varying degrees of national and international pressures. Using data collected from a series of interviews on both sides of the border over a span of 6 years, Vila brings to light the ethnic, racial, economic, and regional factors which establish what he terms a "multiple mirror situation" with regard to national identity and self-identification (6). In this multiple mirror paradigm, the exchange of gazes along the border provides important inferences about the identities and discursive positions that form away from there. In recognizing a border "other", the individual makes certain claims about their own identity, stating what they are and what they are not. This statement "reflects" many factors that may extend well beyond the border, including political affiliation or economic affluence, for example.

Vila's concept of narrative identity provides a segue between his sociological perspective and its application to the literary analysis in the present chapter, Vila recognizes that in the process of identity formation "we all carry narratives that help

furnish us with ways of thinking about ourselves" (243). In his research, the process of self-identification on the part of the interviewees presents "a complete narrative with plot, characters, a beginning, a middle, and an ending," as well as the presence of strong social categories and labels manifesting during the interviews (242). Thus, a narrative identity, essentially the border story of the individual, evolves from the sociological interview. Vila's interpretation of the border relations between El Paso and Juarez can be used to understand the narratives of identity formulated in the city of Corumba on Brazil's far western border.

This chapter also draws on José Manuel Valenzuela Arce's interpretation of the cultural border relations between the United States and Mexico.[41] Valenzuela Arce's observations on the multiple realities and centralities of the frontier are relevant to my discussion of the formation of an alternative symbolic border in the western region of Brazil created by intersecting networks of the drug trade. Of particular interest are Valenzuela Arce's discussions of the border as a "zona de tolerancia", as well as his formulation of "intersticios transfronterizos", or border interstices, as applied to the trafficking of cocaine in Brazil and the lax law enforcement present along the border. When in use at the border, both terms refer to a division and definition of a cultural division and definition of space as determined by the most dominant groups in the area. In my analysis, I employ these concepts to show how the narratives, of the border and the

[41] Valenzuela Arce, José Manuel. "Centralidad de las fronteras. Procesos socioculturales en la frontera México-Estados Unidos." *Por las fronteras del Norte: Una aproximación cultural a la frontera México-Estados Unidos*. Coor. José Manuel Valenzuela Arce. México D.F.: Consejo Nacional Para La Cultura y Las Artes, 2003. 33 – 67.

drug trade highlight spaces and networks of criminality and impunity, often determined by a dominant narrative voice. The readings of the border in the novels analyzed in this chapter allow for an exploration of the transnational space created by the drug trade in Brazil and establish a literary cartography of Brazilian narco-fiction.

THE CITY IN CONTEMPORARY BRAZILIAN FICTION

To better understand what the move to the border in these novels represents, it is useful to first review use and criticism of the city in their works. One of the hallmarks of recent Brazilian popular fiction, such as Ferréz's Capão pecado (1999) and Luiz Ruffato's Eles eram muitos cavalos (2001), has been its distinctively urban focus, depicting the experience of daily life in Brazil's mega-cities. It is within the city that the problems of late 20th and 21st society are detailed and its shortcomings placed at the scrutiny of the reader. This urban focus, in addition to being an artistic choice in the construction of the novel, is also part of the Brazilian experience during and following the military dictatorship. In her essay, "A ficção brasileira hoje: Os caminhos da cidade," Tânia Pellegrini explains the exodus from rural to urban occurring during this time:

> Uma outra vertente que se aprofunda, a partir da década 1970 . . . é a que expressa as relações entre a ditadura militar, a modernização conservadora e a violência. O êxodo rural, que a esperança no milagre da industrialização opera, vai, na verdade, inchar as cidades, favelizando as periferias, gerando legiões de excluídos que rapidamente se tornam marginais, pelo fato de não puderem suprir

> uma serie de novas necessidades que a própria cidade cria, sobretudo por meio da publicidade e dos meios de comunicação de massa. (124 – 125)[42]

Hope and belief in the economic miracle drives the mass migration of the 1970s, but the city is unable to deliver on these promises. What results is the widening of the socio-economic gap in the urban space, overwhelmingly prevalent in the peripheral areas of the city. With the military dictatorship pushing for rapid development and capitalization of the nation's overall economy, the informal marketplace grows as a means of answering the failures of the metropolis for those residing outside of this national project, be it the *favela* or the periphery.[43] Yet this informal space transforms as well, with the traditional *malandros* and *bicheiros* of the communities losing ground to the up-and-comers driving the influx of new narcotics onto these streets.[44] In turn, this process of urban exclusion and marginalization gives rise to a literature that depicts the violent effects and harsh realities of this transition.

In Pellegrini's 2008 essay, "No fio da navalha: literature e violência no Brasil de hoje", she elaborates upon the roots of this tradition, citing the works of 19th century

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[42] Pellegrini, Tânia. "A ficção brasileira hoje: Os caminhos da cidade." *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana,* 21.53 (2001): 115 – 128. Web. 2 March 2011.

[43] In Brazil, both *favela* and periphery, or *periferia*, are terms used to denominate the neighborhoods surrounding the large cities. Both can refer to areas of poverty consisting of informal, unauthorized, or underserved housing. Generally, the income levels in the neighborhoods are low and they often lack infrastructure support and resources from the city.

[44] Roughly translating to scoundrel (*malandro*) and bankers for the illegal lottery (*bicheiro*), the two were common fixtures in most working class and low-income neighborhoods throughout the first part of the century, forming the base for the illegal economy and marketplace. For a better understanding of the displacement of traditional petty crime in the city, see Enrique Desmond Arias' *Drugs and Democracy in Rio De Janeiro: Trafficking, Social Networks, and Public Security*. In fiction, João Antônio's *Leão-de-Chácara* and Paulo Lins' *Cidade de Deus* offer a vivid portrayal of this process as well.

authors such as José de Alencar, Machado de Assis, Lima Barreto, and Aluízo de Azevedo as forefathers to the trend of urban writing in Brazilian literature.[45] The works published at the turn of the century tended to highlight the modernization of the city, established through law, order, and reason. The few criminal elements present in these works focused on the praiseworthy qualities of the *malandro* shown as a good thief or community defender, downplaying their petty crime in favor of redeeming characteristics, such as their charisma and craftiness (Pellegrini 43). As the political and criminal paradigms shift in the late 1960s and early 1970s, so too does the representation of the urban in literature and Rubem Fonseca is at the forefront of this new wave.

While the use of the city in Brazilian fiction is certainly not an innovation, the unfiltered portrayal of its criminal underworld, however, was a novelty at the time. With a realistic style termed "ferocious" and "brutal" by literary critics Antônio Candido and Alfredo Bosi, respectively, Rubem Fonseca's short stories and novels expose the city's underbelly through descriptions of violence, criminals (of various social strata), sex, and human degradation, undermining the image of progress and tranquility maintained by the hegemonic discourses of the military regime.[46] For Fonseca, urbanity is not a sophisticated condition to be celebrated, but rather a condition to be endured. Having built his career as a police officer in Rio de Janeiro, eventually reaching an elevated rank within the Civil Police, Fonseca draws upon these experiences and his exposure to Rio's

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[45] Pellegrini, Tânia. "No fio da navalha: literatura e violência no Brasil de hoje." *Ver e Imaginar o Outro: Alteridade, desigualdade, violência na literatura brasileira contemporânea*. Org. Regina Dalcastagnè. São Paulo: Editora Horizonte, 2008. 41 – 56. Print.

[46] Fonseca's works tend to center in and around the city of Rio de Janeiro, often portraying the cold brutality of male perpetrators. Examples include; the homicidal executive in the stories "Passeio Nocturno I & II," the sociopathic killer in "O Cobrador," and the three murderous robbers in "Feliz Ano Novo."

world of crime in his own literary work. His contribution to the establishment of a violent, urban style of representing crime sets the benchmark for later Brazilian writers who also seek to incorporate the metropolis in their writing.[47]

The decade of the 1990s, as the political, social, and economic turbulence in Brazil's major cities would spur a creative reaction from a new generation of writers. Many of the authors publishing during this time cited inspiration and influence from writers such as Rubem Fonseca and Dalton Trevisan. What results is a continuum of literary production that engages and redefines the urban space of the time. Spurring this production are the growing pains of Brazil's process of democratization coupled with the rise of social conflicts in response to neoliberal economic policies. In his panoramic study of the correlation between violence and culture, "Breve mapeamento das relações entre violência e cultura no Brasil contemporâneo", Karl Erik Schollhammer offers the following summary of the 1990s:

> O início da década de 1990 foi marcado pela escalada das chacinas e, com ela, uma maior visibilidade do envolvimento de policiais no crime . . . As ligações perigosas entre policiais, esquadrões de morte, justiceiros e o próprio tráfico foram expostas na imprensa nacional e internacional e desencadearam mobilizações contra a violência urbana . . . A década foi marcada por intervenções

[47] His writing has been criticized not only because of its explicit content, but also because of the position from which it is written; a white, middle-class male writing about the criminal exploits of the economically disadvantaged. His collections of short stories, *Feliz ano novo* (1975) and *O Cobrador* (1979), along with his crime novels *O caso Morel* (1973), *A grande arte* (1983), and *Bufo & Spallanzani* (1986), among others, have all received similar criticism for continuing to display this tendency. For more on this, see Regina Dalcastagnè's discussion of "Exotismo" in her essay "Vozes nas sombras" in *Ver e Imaginar o Outro* (2008).

militares na guerra contra o tráfico, duros golpes judiciais contra a máfia do jogo do bicho e uma relativa moralização da polícia militar e civil . . . (66 – 67)

With the lines between legal authority and criminal activity blurred and the public eye being drawn into the conflict, as accounts of violent clashes between police and traffickers in the major cities flood the media, fiction writers respond by incorporating these elements into their works and exposing the deeper networks at the heart of these urban conflicts.[48]

Borrowing from Fonseca's brutal style, Patrícia Melo's breakout hit O Matador (1994), tells the tale of Máiquel, a young resident of São Paulo's periphery neighborhoods. Melo incorporates the themes of criminality, police corruption, and social discrimination of the time by tracing Máiquel's rise and fall from local justiceiro,or vigilante, to owner of a private security firm. Her stark vision of this side of the city presents a world in which increased violence allows for social ascension. O Matador became a best seller and established Melo as a dominant voice in Brazil's contemporary wave of urban writers. Equally austere is Marçal Aquino's O Invasor (2002), a tale of murder for hire and betrayal involving two well-off São Paulo businessmen.[49] By seeking a hired assassin in the periphery of the city, but later facing the consequences of this associate who will not leave them alone, issues of economic inequality, violence,

[48] For an in-depth analysis of the press' use of the rhetoric of war in describing these armed conflicts in Rio de Janeiro see Lorraine Leu's "The Press and the Spectacle of Violence in Contemporary Rio de Janeiro" in *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 13.3 (2004).

[49] It should be noted that Aquino began writing the novel in the 1990s, but in 1997 he converted the material he had already written into a screenplay instead. The film based on this novel/screenplay was released in 2001, while the novel itself was completed and published in 2002.

justice, and urban sprawl become important elements in the narrative. Like Melo, the fame of Aquino's O Invasor establishes him as a popular voice in Brazil's literary scene, engaging with various spaces and conflicts of São Paulo within his work while growing his readership. Due to these works, Melo and Aquino are recognized among the important literary voices of the generation.[50] In summary, Fonseca, Melo, and Aquino owe much of their literary recognition and credibility to their engagement with a very strong and prevalent tradition of urban Brazilian elements in fiction. With such success stemming from urban literature, the decision by these authors to move their narratives far from the mega-city to the urban border space represents an important shift.

CORUMBÁ AND THE WESTERN BORDER

Surrounded by the Pantanal wetlands along the banks of the Paraguay River, the frontier city of Corumbá historically served as a waypoint for travelers navigating the western regions of Brazil, spurring economic expansion into the nation's interior.[51] Until 1930, Corumbá was the third largest port in Latin America.[52] Nicknamed the "Cidade Branca," or White City, due to the light color of its native soil stemming from high limestone deposits, the city's proximity to the river long represented a viable commercial

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[50] In an effort to establish a literary school or tradition for this new generation of writers, both Melo and Aquino are later associated with the classification of "Geração 90," as articulated in Nelson de Oliveira's compilation of short stories of the same name. The previous "Geração 70," having arisen at another moment of national uncertainty (i.e. the military dictatorship), included authors such as Rubem Fonseca, Lygia Fagundes Telles, Dalton Trevisan, Sérgio Sant'Anna, and João Antônio, among others.

[51] Located in the states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul in Brazil, and bordering Bolivia and Paraguay, the Pantanal is a natural region that is the largest wetland in the world. The marshy region is almost entirely covered by floodwaters during the rainy season and yields incredible biodiversity. The abundance of grasses in the region has also made it a key area for raising cattle.

[52] Historical information obtained from the city government of Corumbá's official website: http://www.corumba.ms.gov.br/site/corumba/2/

waterway for the region's indigenous tribes and early settlers alike (Proença 9).[53] Throughout the 1950s, it continued to be physically isolated from the rest of the country due to this strong reliance on its waterways, with the rivers acting as the only point of access to the city until the further development of railways. Overland access to the region was restricted due the fact that almost 60% of Corumbá's territory is covered by the Pantanal, and even more so during the rainy season, resulting in the city's other nickname "Capital do Pantanal".[54] The completion of the railroads in 1953 ended this era of prosperity along the rivers, as they no longer served as the only means of access to the area. While economically significant to the nation's territorial growth, Corumbá remained largely outside of the dominant national imaginary, this in contrast to a region like the Northeast which has often served as a source of cultural inspiration.[55]

The city's remote surroundings have, however, made it a popular smuggling route since its foundation. More recently, the city's nickname, "Cidade Branca", took on a new connotation, as an official inquiry into the problem of narcotrafficking by the Brazilian Congress' Parliamentary Investigations Commission revealed numerous public officials, business owners, and traffickers as being linked to the city through the cocaine trade and

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[53] Proença, Augusto César. *Corumbá de todas as graças*. Campo Grande: Gráfica e Editora Ruy Barbosa, 2002.

[54] *Ibid*.

[55] Ethnomusicologist Larry Crook explains the importance of Northeastern culture in his *Music of Northeast Brazil* (2009) stating, "It is this 'other Brazil' – the Brazil of the Northeast, with the major colonial urban centers of Salvador da Bahia and Recife, Pernambuco, on the tropical Atlantic coast and a vast rural region in the interior known as the *sertão* – that today's Brazilians perceive as the wellspring of their country's 'authentic' national character and the home of its 'purest' traditional culture and music" (11).

other organized crime. Thus the city's former glory as a transnational trade hub has been somewhat revived by the drug trade.

The fact that authors Rubem Fonseca and Patrícia Melo would both choose to evoke the city of Corumbá in their narratives of the drug trade, and the fact that they were published nearly 27 years apart, deserves greater attention. Outside of the two novels to be examined in this section, Fonseca and Melo have shared ongoing comparisons of their work, stemming primarily from their common use of the crime novel genre and their unhindered depictions of urban violence, as previously mentioned. Further fueling these comparisons has been the collaboration of the two on screenplays for film adaptations of novels from both authors, leading many critics to designate Melo as the natural heiress to Fonseca's brutal narrative style.[56] More relevant for this study is the process by which these authors choose to depict an alternative space of the Brazilian drug trade and the reproduction of elements between *A grande arte* and *Ladrão de cadáveres*. The novels highlight expansive networks of political and moral corruption traversing the national and regional territory, often employing violence as a means of mediating relationships of power. I explore the textual construction of the border and then look at those who traverse and negotiate these transnational spaces. In doing so, I question not only the permeability of the border space but also how the narratives engage in greater issues of impunity and corruption of narcotrafficking.

[56] For further explanation of the stylistic genealogy between Fonseca and Melo, see Tânia Pellegrini's "A ficção brasileira hoje: Os caminhos da cidade."

The Brazilian western border is also present in Marçal Aquino's *Cabeça a prêmio* and appears as an equally complex region. Aquino's tale unfolds primarily across the states of Acre, Rondônia, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, and Paraná. In the 2006 Brazilian presidential elections, all but Acre and Rondônia were among the 7 states won by top presidential candidate Geraldo Alckmin after the final second round of voting, losing the election to Lula da Silva. Luis Inácio Lula da Silva was the presidential candidate from Brazil's Worker's Party or Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT). The PT maintains a center-left political platform, supporting social democracy and many social projects. In the 2010 elections, all 5 states were among the 11 won by presidential candidate José Serra after second round voting in which he lost to Dilma Rousseff, also the candidate for the PT.[57] The fact that both Alckmin and Serra belong to Brasil's second-largest political party, the Partido Social Democrata Brasileiro (PSDB) or Brazilian Social Democracy Party, shows that the border region presented in Aquino's work represents an important base of political power for the opposition. Presenting itself as having a center or center-left platform, the PSDB nonetheless maintains strong alliances with many of the nation's conservative, right-wing parties.[58] In essence, the area dominated by the PSDB is firmly rooted in the traditional oligarchy of power along the western border.

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[57] For more on the election results and national mapping of Brazil's last 3 presidential elections, see: http://ultimosegundo.ig.com.br/eleicoes/dilma+ganha+em+mg+rj+nordeste+e+na+maior+parte+do+norte/n1237816499949.html

[58] For more on the development and presence of the PSDB in Brazilian politics, see the entry entitled "Brazilian Social Democracy Party" in John J. Crocitti's *Brazil Today: An encyclopedia of Life in the Republic Vol. 1*.

With relation to the narcotics trade, these states also form a key area of operations for one of the Brazilian Defense Ministry's largest interagency military operations along national borders. Codenamed "Operação Ágata," the project initiated under President Dilma Rousseff in 2011 is now in its seventh round. As the operation's website states, the objective is to; "Combater delitos transfronteiriços e ambientais e intensificar a presença do Estado na região de fronteira, além de apoio médico e odontológico a pessoas carentes" (Ministério da Defesa).[59] Published in 2003, Aquino's novel appears at a time when the region was not receiving intensified political or military attention, resulting in an account of the drug trade that is not overshadowed by the official discourse of anti-narcotics propaganda. Just as the PSDB was able to take advantage of the oligarchies present in the region to establish continuing political power and influence, narcotraffickers were able to buy into these power relationships and gain influence across the region to grow their business. In this chapter I analyze how all the elements mentioned above are combined in these novels to redefine the common and hegemonic understanding of the border region, the culture of the narcotics trade, and, in consequence, the Brazilian nation.

VENGEANCE AND EXILE IN CORUMBÁ

A grande arte, Fonseca's second novel, follows the exploits of the carioca lawyer Paulo Mandrake in the early 1980s as this anti-hero investigates the deaths of two female clients, both prostitutes, in relation to another client, a wealthy entrepreneur from Rio's

[59] http://www.defesa.gov.br/operacao-agata/entenda-operacao.html

elite who seeks out his services to retrieve a missing video tape.[60] Mandrake sets into motion his web of contacts to find out more details about his client and to ascertain the importance of the tape. Approximately the first third of the novel is dedicated to this process of disclosure, with Mandrake employing the suave investigative techniques that will become hallmarks in his later appearances in Fonseca's work. In the novel, he traverses Rio's most expensive neighborhoods and sleaziest botecos, or small booze joints, to piece together the deaths of the young women. His insatiable sexual appetite leads him to start affairs with several female clients and his police contacts help him remain on the killer's trail. However, as Mandrake is unable to identify the main culprit quickly enough, the body count in the novel continues to rise.

These are the elements that mark Fonseca's return to a more formulaic construction of the hardboiled crime novel, with Mandrake's unorthodox approach drawing comparison to Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade. As Megan Abbott notes in her 2002 study of the genre, *The Street Was Mine*, "The hardboiled heroes of Chandler and Cain, not to mention Hammett . . . generally derive from working- or lower-middle- to middle-class origins. Further, hardboiled detectives rely not on dilettantish and clever disguises or even analytical skills but intuition, 'gut,' uninterrupted emotion, or even

[60] The character of Mandrake appears in several of Fonseca's works, always as the womanizing, criminal lawyer whose moral ambiguity allows him to manipulate the urban underworld for his professional gain. The name itself brings to mind the famous comic strip "Mandrake the Magician," created by Lee Falk and Phil Davis in 1934, in which the hero's psychic and telekinetic abilities help him on his adventures. I believe Fonseca evokes the name and memory of this cartoon Mandrake in his character for two reasons. First, it is a way of paying homage to one of the early heroes of the crime fiction genre, albeit in the form of the comic strip. Second, the juxtaposition of the "magical" Mandrake against the highly sexualized carioca Mandrake is meant to heighten the impression of his charisma, indicating that the lawyer possesses an almost otherworldly charm and power of seduction.

brute force" (15 – 16). Fonseca's Mandrake presents the Brazilian contribution to the genre, as his propensity for fine Portuguese wines and cigars reveal a slightly higher class designation granted to him by way of his occupation as a lawyer, different from Hammett's Sam Spade, but his tenacity in tracking down leads and aggressive (both sexual and physical) pursuit of information place him squarely among the hardboiled greats. Mandrake's movement through the city indicates changing urban landscape and the emergence of a new criminal empire in Brazil. Regarding the presence of the city in hardboiled novels, Abbott notes, "they do present the modern city as corrupted by the poisonous wealth of the exploitative businessmen who own it" (16). *A grande arte* incorporates this concept of the city controlled by "poisonous wealth" throughout Mandrake's investigation, as it seems that the suspects with the highest socio-economic class and resources are the ones most involved in the serious crimes in the city.

The first two pages describe a murdered woman marked on the cheek with a knife and the scene serves as an unofficial prologue for the rest of the book. However, the first official chapter begins with a much different tale. It is the description of the gentrification of a neighborhood that takes center stage in this opening. The reader is introduced to Mandrake, the protagonist, drinking a beer in one of the few remaining bars of Rio's former Red-light District, with buildings being literally bulldozed around him. The demolition of the houses of ill repute marks an important change in the landscape of the city. The appropriation of this space of prostitution by urban developers and the destruction of the neighborhood is at the center of the scene, showing the necessary process of destruction that precedes most cases of gentrification:

> As casas estavam sendo demolidas para dar espaço a um outro lugar chamado Cidade Nova . . . Ainda estava intacto um lado inteiro da rua, a última que restava da velha zona de meretrício. Ouvia-se o barulho das máquinas derrubando as paredes ainda de pé . . . Não seriam mais vistas prostitutas nas janelas brincando com os clientes que passavam . . . Lembrei-me da primeira vez em que fora àquela rua. Parecera-me uma alegre feira, cheia de homens, andando de um lado para o outro, fumando e conversando nas esquinas; parados na frente das casas olhando as mulheres. (11)[61]

The combination of the demolition of the houses with Mandrake's memory of his first visit expresses a sense of grief at various levels over the loss of innocence. On the one hand, there is nostalgia over the disappearance of this space of vice, the site of a bad habit perceived as relatively innocent and commonplace, at least from the perspective of Mandrake. The conversion of this space of prostitution into a socially acceptable and beneficial site (see Footnote 23) by corporate investors furthers a process of displacement experienced by petty criminals at the time. Changing urban dynamics, be it the

[61] The neighborhood of Cidade Nova is of great cultural value for the city of Rio de Janeiro, and Brazil in general. Left in disrepair and converted to a zone of vice and crime for most of the 20th century, in the early 1980s, the area underwent great reform and rehabilitation as it was selected as the site for the construction of the iconic Sambódromo da Marquês de Sapucaí. This is the samba stadium designed by renowned architect Oscar Niemeyer and home to the annual Carnaval parade for the city, which draws millions of visitors yearly and serves as one of the most important exports of Brazilian cultural capital. The sambódromo was completed in 1984, just 1 year after the publication of *A grande arte*. The scene described here appears to show the process of demolition that took place in preparation for the construction of the samba stadium. For a more complete history of the changes in the Cidade Nova, see Bruno Carvalho's *Porous City: A cultural history of Rio de Janeiro* (2013).

introduction of new drugs, new crimes, or the progress of the city itself, enforce the dominance of a new order in the periphery of the city.[62]

On the other hand, Mandrake's romanticized memories of his first visit to the district disrupted by the physical sound of bulldozers crushing walls foreshadow the lawyer's process of internal change, which will result in a more extreme loss of innocence and personal transformation later in the novel, as Mandrake will be drawn closer to this source of destruction. This new order is established by the shadowy "Escritório Central," or Main Office, an anonymous conglomerate of legitimate businesses and investors who secretly control a criminal enterprise in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, with activities ranging from drugs to prostitution to investment banking (152). The destruction, and later reconstruction, of this part of the district alludes to a greater process of displacement and exclusion that reinforces barriers within the city, be they social, economic, or other. Thus, this corporate entity is presented as having the power to redefine spaces of criminality within the city, in essence, defining boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate urban spaces. Centers of power and influence in the city will be put at odds with not only the marginal sectors of this urban space, but also with the transnational borders of the nation.

Mandrake's confrontation with the "Escritório Central" (EC) occurs just as the intensity of the investigation builds, with the lawyer seemingly getting too close to discovering the involvement of an EC associate in the murders. As such, Mandrake's

[62] For more information on the changes in the peripheries of Brazilian cities, including changes in crime and population, refer back to the section of this chapter entitled "The City in Contemporary Brazilian Fiction".

professional motivation and personal life are simultaneously interrupted by an attempt on his life, later resulting in a quest for revenge on the part of the lawyer. After returning home with his "official" girlfriend Ada, the couple is assaulted in Mandrake's apartment. The perpetrators tie up Mandrake and proceed to torture him to learn the whereabouts of the videocassette:

> Eram dois sujeitos, de blusão. Um alto, muito forte, de rosto liso. O outro, de barba ruiva, tinha uma verruga no nariz e uma Browning quarenta e cinco na mão. Foi esse quem falou . . . O grande amarrou minhas mãos atrás das costas, enquanto o outro me apontava a arma . . . Só percebi o golpe quando a mão do ruivo com a faca recuou. A dor não foi grande, a canelada fora muito pior. Senti o sangue molhando a camisa. Senti que a luz da sala escurecia. (78)

Upon realizing that the tape is not there, the assailants leave Mandrake for dead. Later, while recovering from the attack at a hospital, we learn that after Mandrake passed out Ada was subsequently raped with the handle of knife used in the attack, as Mandrake's doctor coldly describes "Eles usaram o cabo da faca, me parece. Na vagina e no ânus" (81). The incident marks a crucial narrative shift in the novel, as it causes Mandrake to abandon his professional demeanor as a lawyer and engage in a vendetta against his attackers. In his search for revenge and truth, Mandrake will leave the familiarity of Rio de Janeiro for the exotic frontier space of Corumbá, in the process exposing a direct link

between the border and the metropolis and transgressing the usual ways of narrating narcotrafficking.

The stabbing is an important symbolic event in the novel because it is the act that allows Mandrake to traverse the boundary between law-abiding society and the criminal world. Likewise, it provides the motivation needed to abandon the cityscape in the pursuit of personal justice. Beyond this impetus, the act raises the issue of masculinity in crime fiction and the gendered nature of crime space. Rebecca Biron's *Murder and Masculinity: Violent Fictions of Twentieth-Century Latin America* (2000) examines how Latin American crime fiction uses masculine subjectivity and violence in novels to connect to the constructions of power and gender relations in the real world. Regarding violence against the female subject, Biron explains that:

> In the case of the crime narratives in this study, the fact that the bodily integrity of women is violated along with the law calls into questions the murderers' masculinity. Like the abstract category of femininity, the criminal subject is constituted as that which the dominant order – at least in the guise of legality – excludes. The murderers' attempts to "rise against power" falter on the boundary between identification with the masculinity of that power and identification with the feminized position of its victims. (21)

The act and space of the stabbing become a gendered conflict, as the masculinities of the aggressor and Mandrake are at odds, with the aggressor attempting to subvert Mandrake's position of privilege and legal authority by violating the body of Ada. The

space of Ada's body becomes the battleground on which masculinities are asserted. After having lost his dominance over Ada's body, the stabbing prompts Mandrake to seek out a strictly criminal resolution for his personal problem, in essence, crossing the symbolic boundary between the criminal and non-criminal worlds to reassert his masculinity.

Mandrake reveals the need for redemption through crime and the reader is able to identify this need as well as identify with, and even applaud, Mandrake the criminal. These key elements of personal identification and moral ambiguity in action and emotion, these connections to the real world of the reader where morals and ethics are not always clearly defined, are what make the novel a solid example of crime fiction. In the classic essay, "The Simple Art of Murder," Raymond Chandler argues for the use of realism in crime fiction as a key element to success in the genre, explaining that "down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid" (991 – 992).[63] To fulfill this challenge set forth by Chandler, Mandrake must seek out his assailant and enter the "mean streets" of the criminal, uncovering not only a hidden side of himself (the vengeful boyfriend), but also uncovering the world of his target. While recovering from the trauma of the attack, Mandrake's police informant notifies him that one of his assailants has been identified as Camilo Fuentes, a Bolivian narco trafficker who is heading to the city of Corumbá for a meeting. Thus the criminal realm is suddenly transported from the urban setting of Rio de Janeiro to the frontier with Bolivia.

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[63] Chandler, Raymond. "The Simple Art of Murder." *Later Novels and Other Writings*. New York: Library of America, 1995. 977 – 992. Print.

Mandrake pushes to the border seeking revenge, hence his initial construction of the space is marred by negativity. While following his assailant, Camilo Fuentes, on a train bound for Corumbá, Mandrake observes that on the train, "Havia muitos bolivianos na fila, que haviam ido a São Paulo fazer compras e agora começavam a longa viagem de volta" (99). The Bolivians Mandrake encounters here represent the small merchants who travel to Brazil to purchase goods for their commerce. This commercial movement or buzz of goods and people at the station and on the train provide an initial impression of the greater commercial relationships present along the border even before Mandrake (or the reader) have entered the border town. While the physical national boundary may be fixed, the commercial boundaries and networks reach far beyond this single space. Later in the dining cart, he is surrounded by an impromptu rogues' gallery, with one table occupied by a group of "contrabandistas" and the other by the trafficker and killer Camilo Fuentes, all of whom are Bolivian (100). Mandrake casts these Bolivians in Brazil as almost exclusively engaging in the informal, illegal commerce of contraband and in the drug trade. His perspective limits Bolivians to a criminal identity while their journey to Corumbá implies that the border city will be equally plagued by the criminal activity of these passengers.

Mandrake's perception of the border and the people who reside there, comes from a position of power, as his urban, educated origin seem to provide him with the authority to pass judgment on the frontier. His attempts to deny any commonality between the Bolivians on the train and himself reflect a desire to maintain a superiority of identity. Pablo Vila's work on the El Paso – Juarez division in *Crossing Borders, Reinforcing*

Borders becomes a useful tool for examining Mandrake's discourse in this section. Vila questions the use of nationality or ethnicity in the process of classifying others and its discriminatory nature. Since he studies the US – Mexican Border, one common thematic plot which emerges in his interviews with Anglo-Americans is the hegemonic view that "equates poverty with Mexicans" and, later, "the idea of 'otherness' they feel in relation to Mexicans is so profound that it is not enough to talk about El Paso and Juarez belonging to different countries . . . [but] that both cities belong to two different worlds (86 - 87). Reading the aforementioned descriptions of the Bolivians on the train ride to Corumbá with Mandrake, this same sense of otherness and other-worldliness becomes apparent. Mandrake is establishing important internal, regional borders through these definitions of identity. The division between the city of São Paulo and the surrounding regions becomes apparent on the train through the differentiation established between the riders. He attempts to deny any commonality between the Bolivians on the train and his Brazilian identity. Further, the focus on contraband and trafficking associates the Bolivian identity with negative, illicit activity while Mandrake's Brazilian identity remains dominant and free from judgment. Instead of the defining the border "other" by equating them with poverty, as we see in the Mexico example, the internal regional borders on the train are defined via criminality, with the outsiders defined as the criminal element from Mandrake's urbane perspective. This division is ironic because his sole purpose on the train is to commit a murder under the guise of revenge, thus making Mandrake just as "criminal" as any of the Bolivians on the train. Vila notes a similar perception of criminality among his interviewees, as Anglo-Americans attribute

indications of wealth on the part of Mexicans to involvement in criminal activity (92). The prejudice and judgment that the Americans wield against the Mexicans stems from long-standing constructions of border identities, where the Mexicans are defined as lazy and lacking the entrepreneurial spirit needed to legitimately establish wealth.

Similarly, the Bolivians in the novel, from the perspective of Mandrake, appear to be driven by a pathological desire for the illicit, further widening the division between these border identities. However, Camilo Fuentes complicates Mandrake's generalization of Bolivian immigrants, instead becoming a symbol of national conflict occurring at the border. This becomes apparent through a moment of private reflection from Fuentes, as he reveals:

> Seu pai fora morto na fronteira porque vacilara ao enfrentar seu assassino. Camilo tinha sete anos quando isso aconteceu, mas seu tio Miguel lhe contara tudo: o homem que matara seu pai era brasileiro, como eram brasileiros os usurpadores de larga parte do território boliviano, um território tão grande que se transformara num dos estados da Republica do Brasil, o vizinho imperialista que, com a convivência de governantes bolivianos corruptos, há séculos roubava as riquezas do outro lado da fronteira, aos quais prestava pequenos serviços humilhantes em troca de pagamento miserável. Por esse motivo e outros mais obscuros, odiava os brasileiros. (104)

Initially presented as simply a cold-blooded killer, Camilo Fuentes' back-story reveals a complex internal conflict with a neighboring nation. The personal trauma of his father's death is associated with Brazilian imperialism along the Bolivian border. His father's inability to act in the face of death, just as the nation fails to confront the stealing of its lands, falls short of the masculine archetype of the Bolivian male and fuels Fuentes' rage against all things Brazilian. Recalling Rebecca Biron's work on the Latin American crime novel, this presentation of Camilo Fuentes reveals a gendered border space if masculine conflict defined by violence and hostility. The rape of Ada forces a stand-off of masculinity in the personal space, while the death of Fuentes' father forces a stand-off between symbolic national masculinities. Fuentes' involvement in narcotrafficking and the criminal underworld becomes a form of retribution for these offenses, though it is later revealed that he actually works for the people he most despises.

Fuentes' personal identity is defined vis-à-vis a national situation that is only possible due to the porosity of the national border. The Brazilian nation takes advantage of the political and economic weakness of its Bolivian neighbor and the fragile border to expand its national territory. Camilo Fuentes carries with him the personal history of this traumatic experience, fundamentally, a narrative border identity. While Corumbá does not form part of the usurped territory in Fuentes' tale, it does expose these multiple facets of the border (i.e. the imperial hand personal histories of the border). Fuentes even recasts the act of narcotrafficking itself, as he reveals that his partnership with the EC in the trafficking of cocaine is an act of resistance, providing the financial capital needed to eventually cut off all reliance on Brazil, "Estava perto o dia em que nenhum brasileiro

mandaria mais nele" (105). In this account, Fuentes challenges Mandrake's skewed perception of Bolivian identity. It is important to note, however, that until this point in the narrative, Fuentes is the only character in the novel shown as participating in the drug trade in Brazil. In this role, his depiction is somehow predictable, as he is presented as foreign, vindictive, violent, and non-white. An initial reading of this image seems to reinforce Mandrake's observations about Bolivians shifting guilt and wrongdoing from Brazilian participants to an international "other." However, the fact that the criminal element in Corumbá is limited to the Escritorio Central later breaks this assumption..

Before embarking on the train, Mandrake's police contact warns him that the narcotics division is also following Fuentes for traveling to Corumbá. He explains to Mandrake that "No momento, a maior parte da coca vem da Bolívia para consumo no Brasil, Estados Unidos, e parte da Europa, principalmente Itália e França, entra por Corumbá vinda de Santa Cruz de la Sierra, passando por Puerto Suárez" (97).[64] By defining the city as a frontier city with porous borders, porosity is understood as a characteristic of criminality. In this way, the Brazilian narcogeography is amplified beyond the market nodes of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. There is a new centralization on the city Corumbá as a key point of commerce and transport for the drugs consumed in these two other cities. In this way, before any actual crime has occurred in the border city, and even before any direct interaction between the characters and the space, it has

[64] It should be noted that Fonseca publishes *A grande arte* just as Bolivia was emerging from the short-lived dictatorship of General Garcia Meza, whose administration and bid for power garnered the nickname the "Cocaine Coup" due to the direct involvement of, and continued relationship with, Bolivia's drug trafficking families. As Mandrake visits the Bolivian town of Puerto Suarez, the residents are shown painting over banners and signs bearing the name "Mi General," signaling the end of the Garcia Meza regime but not necessarily the legacy of the drug trade (120).

already been cast as a space constructed of varying strata of illicit activity, at once a destination for criminals and a source for criminal products.

Once in the city of Corumbá, physically located on the limits of the national territory, it becomes nearly impossible for Mandrake to maintain his dominant discursive position. Mandrake's expectations of finding a seedy, lawless border town are shattered. Corumbá appears to be a relatively peaceful environment with friendly residents and vast natural beauty. The Bolivians he so harshly criticizes on the train leave the city to continue their journey back home to Bolivia. There is no indication of criminal activity in town as Mandrake wanders the streets and the physical construction of the city and border themselves do nothing to confirm the preconceived notions developed by Mandrake throughout the novel. The presence of a functioning urban infrastructure instead break down these notions, as the city possesses paved roads, timely public transportation (buses, trains, and ferries), and public services, including the police, who are easily accessible and accommodating. In many ways, Corumbá embodies the positive traits of a progressive, thriving city. The mystique of the border itself is also broken down, as the public transport works to effectively carry people across the physical border for commerce and leisure. There is neither evidence of drug dealing along the border nor outright signs of police corruption that would facilitate this activity. The porosity of the frontier becomes enigmatic, as no physical illegal drugs are seen as moving across the border. Instead, only the representatives of the trade, the administrators, are shown transiting the divide. The only actual criminals he finds along the border are associates of the "Escritório Central," including Camilo Fuentes, who meet to discuss the future

operations of the business. The perceived threat of detection leads to a decision to move all operations to Colombia, displacing all the imaginary of the Brazilian trade even further away.

The border becomes a space of both personal and ideological failure for Mandrake, as his attempt at revenge fall short and his conception of Corumbá as the center of a criminal empire falls apart. With this reimagining of the border city and the confirmed presence of the EC, Corumbá changes from being the scapegoat of the problems of drugs and violence in Brazil, to becoming a single link in the long chain of criminal power that ultimately leads back to the Escritório Central and the urban centers of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. This revelation forces Mandrake's return to the city. Even after three major crimes occur in the novel; Camilo Fuentes' attempted murder of Mandrake, Mandrake's failed attempt at revenge, and the unveiling of the Escritorio Central's vast network of international narcotrafficking, there is an almost complete absence of judicial punishment in the work. With culpability directed from the border to the centers of national political and economic power, the narrative demands punishment. However, it is this final element that is denied to the reader. The leader of the EC is never officially linked to any crimes and but he commits suicide. The case of the two murdered women at the beginning of the novel is left open, as Mandrake suggests that anyone could have been the killer, even himself. In the end, the resolution of the murders in the novel becomes irrelevant. By shifting the narrative of the drug trade to the border at Corumbá, it becomes possible to highlight the overall problem of criminal impunity in Brazil, as the organizations that control the trade operate across, and beyond, the national

territory. The construction and later deconstructon of the border in *A grande arte* reinforces Fonseca's nuanced perception of drug networks in Brazil, one which recognizes that this organized crime operates freely beyond the city limits and both encompasses and oversteps the farthest reaches of the nation.

CORUMBÁ AS A NARCOMICROCOSM

Patríca Melo's *Ladrão de cadáveres* approaches the city of Corumbá from the perspective of a situation of exile. In this state of separation, Corumbá as a border city will come to establish a microcosm of the drug trade along the entire national border, showing its capacity to unhinge lives and order through its influence. Melo's nameless narrator in *Ladrão de cadáveres* also confronts the boundaries of the urban space before moving to Corumbá, as he recalls that his stressful job as the manager of a telemarketing call center in São Paulo pushed him to the edge, explaining that, "Vivia no meu limite, encharcado de café, correndo pelos corredores da central feito um coelho apavorado" (Melo 18). The image of the frantic office space and the pressures of management seem exhausting, but the narrator showed no indication of wanting to stop, as the position granted him a certain level of respectability and recognition. This initial job and location of the narrator reflect the common anxiety of the average middle-class resident of metropolitan São Paulo, chasing a consumerist dream of wealth yet doing whatever necessary to survive the hyper-urban space. Yet unlike Mandrake, where the boundaries are redefined around him by an outside entity in the Cidade Nova, the nameless narrator is cast out of this frenetic capitalist space by his own actions. The narrator reacts to an

employee's professional discourtesy with a slap in the face. After a week, the young woman stops coming to work and it is reported that she committed suicide, thus causing the narrator to lose his job and force his move to Corumbá (19). Ostracized from the workplace, the narrator is stripped of the symbols that gave his life respectability and significance. Salvation, at least temporary, comes from his cousin's visit and invitation to spend some time in Corumbá (21). The move to the border city represents a period of exile for the narrator, while also allowing him to slow down they rhythm of his lifetime spent "no meu limite" experienced in São Paulo. Hence, the border formation in the novel begins with the narrator, where São Paulo transgresses physical and social divisions to create repressive frontiers and limits in the personal space of the narrator's mind as well. It is with this mindset that he travels to his new home, seeking a way to reconstruct the prestige of his former life.

Even within Corumbá, the narrator continues to engage in self-exiling behavior. The location of his apartment in the "periphery" of the city excludes him from fully participating in the day-to-day life of the town (22).[65] Yet this also becomes a space for introspection, as it is here that he comes to terms with his conflicting relationship with the city and, later in the novel, it is this location that becomes his base of operations for his foray into the illicit business of cocaine. Reflecting on his time in the São Paulo, the narrator explains that:

[65] The concept of the periphery here does not function the same as it does in the context of São Paulo. It simply implies the outskirts of the city.

> Mas agora já consigo pensar em São Paulo como uma espécie atomizador, que me transformou numa coisa mínima, fraca e esmagável, capaz de dar uma bofetada na cara de sua própria funcionaria. Uma doença, na verdade, aquela cidade . . . De qualquer forma, eu tinha caído no poço, afundado e apodrecido como um tomate caído no asfalto depois da feira. Escapara por pouco. Era nesses termos que eu pensava naquela cidade. Prometi nunca mais voltar para aquela vida. Nunca mais, câmbio. (23)

During this interior monologue, the narrator comes to terms with both his past life and his present condition. The harshness of the big city literally devoured him, leaving him without character, without a home, and stained with the blood of his former employee. To some extent, he has no other options for his existence. The recognition of this condition is liberating and allows him to embrace his new life, thus linking him further to the city of Corumbá. His is a decision to live on the margin, at the farthest physical point away from his former life while still remaining in Brazil. The narrator is constructing a narrative border identity, recognizing the importance of the past in prompting his arrival at the frontier, yet rooting himself in his new environment and declaring never to return to this past. The border again becomes an important reference, as the protagonist decides to move to a location on the edge of the national boundary, where identities are more porous.[66]

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[66] Vila's discussion of "Fronterizos" in Ciudad Juarez highlights the importance of these types of identifications along the border. Fronterizo literally refers to someone from the frontier or frontier dweller.

It is during another moment of self-exile within Corumbá that the presence of narcotrafficking is revealed in the novel and the narrator is challenged with the prospect of participating in the illegal trade. Our narrator lacks the opportunity and the motivation for steady employment. He seeks relaxation and seclusion in the form of frequent fishing trips to the surrounding wilderness. The isolation of the wilderness works as a form of therapy for the narrator, as he explains how on one such trip "Estacionei sobre o primeiro ponte, desci para a boca do corixo e fiquei ali, ouvindo o coaxar das rãs e pensando onde iria pescar" and later how "Daquela ponte, quase não se via bicho nenhum, nem mesmo capivara ou jacaré, por conta das fazendas nas vizinhanças" (14). There are no witnesses or judges during these trips, leaving the narrator free to think and act independently in harmony with his surroundings. However, this idyllic scene is marred by a bloody plane crash in the river nearby. After attempting to rescue the downed pilot to no avail, the narrator makes a discovery that will alter the course of his life:

> Foi então que notei a mochila de couro, presa pela alça atrás do banco. Dento, encontrei um pacote inconfundível, desses que você vê na televisão, em reportagens sobre apreensão de drogas. Uma massa compacta e branca, envolta num plástico grosso e lacrado com fita adesiva. Fiz um pequeno furo na embalagem e experimentei o pó esfregando-o na gengiva. Não era entendido no assunto, mas também não era leigo . . . Fiquei ali, pensando no posto policial por

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Like the narrator's decision to stay in Corumbá, the decision of the middle-class Juanrese to use the term "fronterizo" in reference to him or herself creates a strong sense identity linked to the border city (22). Likewise, by openly declaring a vow never to return to São Paulo, the narrator's construction of a new identity on the border in *Ladrão de cadavers* becomes complete.

> onde teria que passar, a caminho de Corumbá. A ideia de um montão de dinheiro fez com que eu não demorasse nem um minuto para tomar minha decisão. Não sei quem disse que o homem não é honesto por muito tempo quando está sozinho, mas é a pura verdade. No mesmo ímpeto, também tirei o relógio do pulso do piloto e me mandei. (17)

So engrained is the economic and cultural significance of the plastic wrapped white package that it only takes the narrator a split second to recognize the potential value and save it from the wreckage. The human life of the pilot is already a lost cause, forcing the narrator to instead focus on the possible personal gain resulting from the package. Admitting that he is no expert in the matter of drugs, but also not completely ignorant of the subject, the visions of mounds of money flood his mind. In the intimate space of the plane cabin filling with water, the corruptive nature of the drug trade becomes immediately apparent through the discovery of the package. This one object solicits an immediate response from the narrator, a quasi-instinctive decision similar to the fight-or-flight reflex. Compounding the issue of the value of the package is the narrator's own admission that, knowing his actions to be dishonest at the least, he goes a step further by stealing the dead man's watch. In doing so, he has established a pact of crime that will be difficult to break. The protagonist becomes a narcotrafficker in the liminal space of the borderland in which he chooses to live. The decision to enter the trade here is an act of free will prompted by the promise of future wealth, revealing that the protagonist still harbors the same consumer desires of his life in São Paulo even in this isolated space. By

approaching the drug trade from this condition of self-exile, *Ladrão de cadáveres* examines the initiation of the individual into the world of the drug trade and builds the grid of influence and involvement upon this framework.

Here emerges one of the great differences between Fonseca's use of Corumbá and Melo's. Fonseca uses the border town to expose a point of exchange in the longer chain of influence that supports the transnational sale of cocaine, with the movement of both product and narrative returning to the big cities. Melo now centers her narrative exclusively on the border city, centering all aspects of the drug trade on the city of Corumbá and its limits. She shows a product that is locally sourced and will later be locally distributed. The impact of this intense focus is that movement is restricted to the border, with the influence and involvement of individuals becoming much more transparent in the narrative. The drugs emanate from the border and employ people at the border to work in the business of trafficking it.

Like Fonseca's Mandrake, Melo's narrator has a contact in the police to provide crucial information as needed, specifically it is his girlfriend Sulamita who works at the police station. Through this contact, the reader is able to see the vestiges of the Escritório Central's organization, as Sulamita details the new structure of the drug business to her ever-curious boyfriend:

> Assim fiquei sabendo que o esquema de drogas em Corumbá não era diferente do resto do Brasil, o que queria dizer que não havia mais cartéis nem máfia, mas sim uma rede de negociantes que misturava na mesma maçaroca locadoras de

> automóveis, fazendas de gado, revendedoras de auto-peças, matadouros, roubo e desmanche de carros, depósitos, táxis-aéreos, com o propósito de facilitar o tráfico. (28)

The structure of the Brazilian drug trade in Melo's Corumbá is a maze-like network of legitimate and illicit liaisons, with all manner of business involved in supporting the movement of the drugs and money derived from the sale. The description predicts the path the narrator will have to navigate to profit from his kilo of cocaine from the sky. The structure of the business described by Sulamita forces the creation of a border identity, crossing and connecting to both sides of the border, where the permeability of the border between Bolivian and Brazil is the element that facilitates growth and reinforces this identity. Like the Fronterizos' relationship between Juanreses and Southern Mexicans in Vila's work, the resident of Corumbá in Melo's novel maintains a border relationship that is always constructed in relation to another country. Additionally, the identity is multi-tiered, where not only does the resident negotiate a relationship between Bolivia and Brazil, but also negotiates a border identity within Brazil among varying strata of Corumbá society.

To sell off the kilo, the protagonist must approach his neighbor, Moacir, to see how easy it will be to convince someone to work as a mule for him to move the drugs that he has now packaged into smaller quantities. Moacir's reaction is surprising, as the narrator expects that, "Achei que seria preciso usar toda a minha lábia de operador de telemarketing para convencer o índio, mas, quando abri a gaveta ao lado da minha cabeceira e retirei os cinquenta papelotes, Moacir já estava convencido. Começou a

tagarelar, a dizer que ele próprio já cogitara ir até Puerto Suárez e abrir o seu próprio negócio" (39). Mirroring the narrator's initial reaction to the cocaine package on the plane, within moments of seeing the product Moacir understands the business proposal and expresses immediate agreement. More surprising is the revelation that he had also already considered entering the business on his own by going to Bolivia (Puerto Suárez). Moacir reinforces the formation of a frontier defined by a criminal relationship, where the Brazilians look across the border to Bolivia to satisfy the needs of illicit business. Moacir's character is particular significant in the border zone because he belongs to the local Guató tribe, a nomadic indigenous group who has traditionally resided along the Paraguay River and the border between Bolivia and Brazil. In the novel, Moacir and the other representatives of the tribe are presented as living in poverty in the periphery of the city, and as the narrator's neighbors. With their numbers dwindling in the region, the Guató people are forced to move to Corumbá, the closest city, to survive. Moacir's actions are a telling sign of the financial difficulty and social exclusion this group faces in the region, looking for any opportunity to get out of their precarious living situation. His agreement to help move the kilo of cocaine thus highlights the financial allure and power of the drug trade in convincing participants to abandon their reservations about criminal activity and chase the dream of wealth. Up to this point in the novel, two separate border dwellers, the outcast from São Paulo and the native tribesman from the region, are both persuaded to develop a new transnational border relationship mediated by the drug trade.

With this agreement, the two begin selling the cocaine locally and the promise of easy money is temporarily fulfilled. As a consequence, the pair is later drawn to Bolivia

to obtain more product, "Roubaram o seu carro? Vá até Puerto Suárez e veja se ele não está por lá. Era isso o que eu lera sobre a cidade. Agora eu rodava pelas ruas enlameadas de Puerto Suárez, mas minha camionete não havia sido roubada. Estávamos lá, eu e Moacir, para negociar" (60). The discursive description of Puerto Suárez establishes an important separation of criminal territories along the border. Puerto Suárez, Bolivia is shown as the destination for stolen goods and the source of cocaine.[67] Through Sulamita's later descriptions of her activities at work, Corumbá is shown to be a town of snitches, murderers, rapists, and drug traffickers (72). Rather than establish a foreign, criminal "other," the novel presents equally corrupt regions on both sides of the border, forming a criminal transnational relationship between the two sides in which no one side is more guilty of purveying crime than the other, inherently a border region befitting of the Valenzuela's title of a zone of tolerance. In this area of contact, the concept of crime and the morals of crime are different than in the cities, so the people who transit and are active in this area are transformed by these elements. Beyond a mere highbrow moralistic condemnation of crime on the border, this balance of transgressions between Bolivia and Brazil emphasize the idea of porosity along the border, from which crime itself becomes less morally condemnable or at the least requires varying layers of

[67] It should be noted that Melo's *Ladrão de cadáveres* is published during Evo Morales' presidency in Bolivia, following his order to expel both the DEA and the US Ambassador from Bolivia following an illegal espionage scandal. As a result, there was growing uncertainty with regard to the future of Bolivia's anti-narcotics efforts. Lax law enforcement and lessened efforts to curve trafficking of drugs along the border were the fear of American officials. In March of 2015, Ex-Bolvian Drug Czar Gen. Oscar Nina was arrested on suspicion of having links to various drug organizations. This arrest coming just 4 years after his predecessor, Rene Sanabria, was sentenced to 15 years of prison for drug trafficking in a US court. Both men were appointed by the Morales regime to reorganize the anti-narcotics forces in the country and increase enforcement against illegal drug trafficking. For more on this, see: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-31747018

analyses before casting judgment and denunciation. Herein lies the richness of Melo's border construction, in the redefinition and remapping of a criminal frontier that the uninitiated reader can access and engage in even as illegal acts take place. It is in this zone that the narrator and Moacir obtain the 2 kilos of cocaine they had sought initially, but are also burdened with the transport of an additional 8 kilos for added profit, a move that will ultimately be their undoing.

Just as Mandrake's visit to Corumbá marks a pivotal moment in the narrative in Fonseca's work, the transformation of Sulamita in *Ladrão de cadáveres* is equally crucial. For much of the novel, Sulamita appears to have her personal and professional life in order, perhaps with the exception of her decision to date the novel's narrator. She presents the most stable and reasonable character. Even after learning of an affair the narrator maintained with his cousin's wife, she is able to forgive him. However, the narrator's increasing association with the drug trade is like a virus, ultimately infecting Sulamita and forcing upon her an unexpected action.

Upon discovery of the narrator's association with the plane crash and the admission of participation in the sale of cocaine from Bolivia, following the arrest and death of Moacir in prison, Sulamita is thrown into a tailspin. She seeks out the advice of her old police partner Joel, at where she overhears Joel' pressuring a man for a bribe in order to ignore a case. The shock of this revelation is enough to change her perspective on her entire situation:

> Uma coisa é você saber que o presidente é corrupto, que governador é corrupto, que o secretário é corrupto. Mas o cara que trabalha com você há sete anos? Ali do seu lado? Que almoça, que janta com você? . . . Que me ensinou tudo? . . . Se Joel . . . é corrup.`to, se é assim, todo mundo naquela delegacia deve levar grana .. . corrupção é um negocio em rede, uma matilha. Por que então me preocupar se meu namorado rouba um quilo de pó de alguém que já morreu? . . . Você não prejudicou ninguém. Você não à um assassino. Nem estuprador. É isso que importa. (130 – 131)

In an instant, a transformation overtakes Sulamita. Her relationship with Joel reveals the extent of corruption in Corumbá as it penetrates all levels of the police force and she must come to terms with her ignorance in the matter. She understands that the entire "system" is broken and no one is immune from its influence. The best solution is to learn how to play the game.

Content with this rationale, Sulamita takes command of both her and the narrator's lives and begins deciding what action needs to be taken in order to recover her dream of a family. Further, Sulamita's newfound confidence in directing the crimes of her boyfriend represents a nuanced shift in the gendered power relations of the traditional crime novel. Here, Sulamita is neither submissive to a male authority nor is she the femme fatale intended to be used sexually and then discarded. Her moral realignment regarding the drug trade and corruption in the border space grants her personal liberation, challenging the masculine gendered space of the crime novel. The criminal dichotomy

between the spaces of Puerto Suárez and Corumbá are put in balance through the smooth execution of the drug trade under the control of Sulamita, only possible, however, due to the permeability of this frontier. Yet there is a resulting unsettled level of impunity which arises out of such a situation, as the pair resolves all of their problems through these crimes and reaches their desired peace and family. As such, the issue of impunity is left open without resolution.

The border, when seen through the lens of the drug trade, is more like a vortex than a division, in that its influence continuously pulls in participants but makes it very difficult to get out. As with Fonseca's work, the focus of the novel is not as much on the transnational movement of the cocaine, but rather the phenomenon of the crime itself. In Melo's novel, this phenomenon is present in the symbiotic relationship between Puerto Suárez and Corumbá, in the telemarketer turned drug trafficker, and in the police coroner turned criminal. All of these point to the moral boundary that must be crossed when dealing with the drug trade, to the internal inventory of costs and benefits stemming from this decision, and to the redefinition of where that moral boundary lies once within the network of the trade.

HOW THE WEST WAS WON: BRAZIL'S WESTERN BORDER IN MARÇAL AQUINO'S *CABEÇA A PRÊMIO*

Aripuaña. Apucarana. Porto Velho. Campo Grande. Rio Branco. Piso Firme. Vilhena. Like a surveyor meticulously plotting points on a new chart, Marçal Aquino's *Cabeça a prêmio* carefully maps these cities from Brazil's interior through a complex tale

of betrayal and revenge. By moving beyond Fonseca's and Melo's dual fixation on the border city of Corumbá, *Cabeça a prêmio* offers an alternate definition of Brazil's vast western borders through its depiction of the ever-expanding network of corruption and violence as used by local trafficking organizations. The Central-West and North regions of Brazil referenced in *Cabeça a prêmio* have traditionally remained outside the popular Brazilian national imaginary. When referenced, these regions were usually associated with the rural vastness of the land, the rich biodiversity of the Pantanal and lower Amazon, and also the vagueness of the borders in the region. More recent studies, however, are changing the place these regions have in the national imaginary. In a 2003 essay Carlos Walter Porto Gonçalves indicates the need for a new thinking about the regions in relation to rising violence, explaining that, "No Brasil, em 2003, 1 em cada 34 habitantes rurais esteve envolvido em conflitos. Esse índice, entretanto, era 1 em cada 6 habitantes rurais envolvidos em conflitos na região Centro Oeste e de 1 para cada 28 na região Norte, as duas regiões que apresentavam Índice de Envolvimento da população maior que a média nacional" (152). Essentially, there has been a growing social problem with interpersonal violence that has far exceeded national averages in these two regions, calling for a realignment of the regions' place in the national narrative and political agenda. This rise in contemporary violent conflict appears at center stage in *Cabeça a prêmio*. By examining the use of personal relationships, a criminal geography, and the porosity of law enforcement, this analysis will show how Marçal Aquino's novel redefines the borders with Bolivia and Paraguay by way of an intricate web of criminal practice.

Cabeça a prêmio incorporates flashbacks and a nonlinear structure to create temporal ambiguity, with the book's three, dominant narrative currents ultimately intersecting in the work's final resolution. The composition of these three, overlapping relationships in the book provides the necessary fluidity to reveal the extensive system of intimidation and violence employed by trafficking organizations in real life. One of these currents consists of the Brothers Menezes, Valdomiro a.k.a. "Mirão" and Abílio, who command a local drug organization from their ranch in Aripuanã, Paraná. Originally deriving wealth strictly from cattle and small-scale contraband, the Brothers Menezes quickly amassed an empire upon becoming involved with cocaine and arms dealing (Aquino 37).[68] In order to maintain the growth and order of this empire, they employ the services of a pilot, Dênis, and two pistoleiros or hired guns, Brito and Albano, among others. It is Dênis' professional relationship with the Brothers Menezes and his personal relationship with Mirão's daughter, Elaine, which constitutes the second current in the novel. As their pilot, Dênis holds a position of great trust and responsibility in the organization by personally overseeing the transport of cocaine from the Menezes' supply contacts in Bolivia to their buyers in Paraguay. However, his intense love affair with Elaine later violates this patriarchal bond of trust with Mirão, setting forth a series of misgivings that will see the couple fleeing the country, Dênis stealing a shipment from the Brothers Menezes, and the pistoleiros called upon to locate both the couple and the drugs. It is in fulfillment of this last action that Brito and Albano become the third narrative current in the novel. Throughout the work, the pair is presented primarily in a

[68] Aquino, Marçal. *Cabeça a prêmio*. São Paulo: Cosac & Naify, 2003. Print.

professional function, either in preparation for, or in completion of, various assassinations ordered by the Brothers Menezes. Only through personal reflection and flashbacks is Brito's life outside of work revealed, as he constantly recalls a painful breakup with a girlfriend in São Paulo, while Albano's past is limited to that which is revealed through Brito's interior monologue. Through the chain of "jobs" presented in the work, as well as the interwoven personal relationships across these currents, it becomes possible to initiate a remapping of the western border in relation to the world of organized crime.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NARRATIVE

While the narration of the drug trade through contract killers and pilots in *Cabeça a prêmio* does well to highlight the world of cocaine trafficking along the border, it is instead the personal relationships presented in the novel which provide the necessary context for understanding the greater role and influence of the illicit in the region. Beginning at the top of the organization with the Brothers Menezes, it is possible to trace the intricate link between personal and socio-criminal relationships. As previously indicated, the family's original source of wealth comes from raising cattle, as "No começo, os Menezes eram fazendeiros e contra-bandistas. Depois, aderiram ao pó e, nos últimos anos, às armas. Um império, que comandavam de uma fazenda na região de Aripuanã" (37). Ranching as a traditional, legitimate form of income also implies a long-enduring structure of social relationships and power in the Brazilian interior, particularly in the Pantanal region. By insisting upon managing their cocaine and weapons trafficking organization from a remote ranch as opposed to a major urban center, the

socio-economic position of the Menezes in Paraná is reminiscent of the traditional system of "coronelismo," and the Vargas era politics of "café com leite," whereby oligarchic, landowning families wielded political influence through the application of personal favors or intimidation.[69] Borrowing from Rebecca Biron's interpretation of the masculine space of crime, the political influence, the breeding of cattle, and illegal traffkicking of arms and drugs by the Brothers Menezes reinforces the creation of a gendered space of patriarchal power in and around Aripuranã. The exchange of political power in the novel becomes apparent through the "jobs" assigned to Brito and Albano, as two of their targets are political dissidents who challenge the local authorities, one a union leader and the other a radio DJ who criticizes the mayor. Recalling the introductory description of the region previously mentioned in the chapter, the real-world political influence in Brazil's 2006 and 2010 presidential elections shows the extent to which this power can reach. In the novel, the patriarchal violence of the "coroneis" remains prevalent as Brito and Albano do not negotiate with the political dissidents, but rather simply eliminate them on behalf of their patrons. In doing so, there emerges a certain standard for the relationships between politics and violence along the western border.

Later, the wealth derived from cattle provides the capital needed to enter the drug trade and thus highlights the involvement of the Brazilian elite in this criminal activity. By situating the headquarters of the group on a ranch, and including this family history of the acquisition of wealth through cattle, drugs, and arms in the novel, Aquino offers a

[69] For a closer look at the early function of coronelismo in Brazil, see George Gardner's "The Baron of Parnaíba" in *The Brazil Reader: History, Culture, Politics*.

rich representation of the drug trade, providing initial sources of wealth and the extent of political power generated by participation in illicit trades (arms and drugs). All of the products of their empire and wealth are tied to some type of movement along the border. The cattle need vast stretches of grassland found along the border to thrive. The arms trade requires the participation of arms traders, police, military, and buyers from various nations in order to function effectively. The trafficking of drugs requires constant border crossings to move drugs and money to intended suppliers and buyers. Their whole existence is tied to an efficient relationship and movement along the frontier space.

While the main source of income for the Menezes clan has changed from that of the coronéis of the early 20th century, with the ownership of the ranch and vast amounts of cattle serving as a thin front to cover the family's illicit activity as well as serving as a status symbol in the region, the use of personal favors and violence remains the same. Focusing in on this position of power, the conflicting, intimate relationships between the Brothers Menezes become more apparent. Though the novel primarily explores the conflicts between Mirão and Abílio, as well as between them and their employees, it is also important to note the novel's treatment of the third, deceased, brother Nicanor Menezes. It is this relationship that underscores the process of delineation of a new border in the work.

Initially referenced in passing, under the guise of a family secret which the Menezes attempt to forget, the story of Nicanor reflects the brutality of the drug trade as it infiltrates close family bonds and, in doing so, associates this same brutality with the seemingly tranquil headquarters at the ranch in Aripuanã. As the original leader of the

three brothers in their illicit enterprise, Nicanor is presented as, "Um cara macho. Sua ideia básica de acerto de contas incluía articulações apartadas na marra e, sempre que possível, a serra-elétrica" (157). Nicanor maintains and grows the business through brute force, using sledgehammers and electric saws to solve conflicts, thus establishing violence as a standard practice amongst the brothers. What he lacks in refinement, he makes up for in business insight, as "O mérito de Niancor: ele conduzira a transição dos negócios da família do contrabando para a droga e, pouco depois, para as armas. Era arrojado, exercia liderança sobre os irmãos. E odiava os homossexuais" (157). Nicanor represents the alpha male in the Menezes family, the defining example of the Brazilian masculine mandate for landowning male of the interior. His violent manor and hatred of homosexuals defies any challenge to this masculinity. Under Nicanor's leadership, the family business becomes much more lucrative, thus benefiting all of the brothers financially, and Aripuanã grows as the home base for these operations. The ranch becomes a compound, housing all of the most important associates. In doing so, the Brothers can maintain vigilance over their associates and ensure the growth of the business. Though isolated physically from any large city, it is here that lavish parties are thrown for foreign kingpins in the hopes of securing future contacts (40). The realm of the illicit and the personal cohabitate in the same space and the ability to fly in foreigners reinforces their domain over the border. Further, Nicanor exercises the type of absolute power established in the business over his very own brothers as well.

This control is particularly troubling with regard to the comment describing his hatred for homosexuals because his twin brother, Abílio, is gay. After repeated attempts

to "beat" the gay out of his twin brother, coupled with strife over his own problems with impotency, Nicanor resolves to rid himself of the "vergonha da família Menezes" and orders a hit on his brother (159). However, Nicanor's assumption that his employees, in this case Albano the hitman, are motivated by the same thirst for brutality as he is, is incorrect. Instead of carrying out the job, Albano warns Abílio of his brother's intentions and renegotiates the contract for triple the pay, only this time with the target being Nicanor. Albano and Abílio later ambush Nicanor, with Abílio executing the coup-de-grâce on his own brother with a shot to the head, thus temporarily restructuring the hierarchy of power within the family by borrowing from his brother's cruel tutelage. It's to view this murder in terms of Rebecca Biron's *Murder and Masculinity*¸where she centers much of her analysis of Latin American crime novels around the elimination of women in the stories as providing some type of "rebirth" of a male protagonist, tales which provide the opportunity to "explore the frustrated equation of masculinity with political and individual autonomy in specifically Latin American contexts" (27). In the betrayal between Abílio and Nicanor, the incorporation of a homosexual character surpassing, and even eliminating, the hyper-masculine, "macho" brother and head of empire does not transgress the ideal of masculine superiority and aggressiveness in the novel. Though the homosexual brother eliminates the alpha male, the action occurs under the conditions of the Brazilian masculine mandate maintained by Nicanor; the use of extreme brutal violence. The novelty of the brother's sexual preference is lost in this exchange. Had Abílio been a sister rather than a brother, would this usurpation of power have been possible? Perhaps so, as revealed later in the novel with Elaine's act of

violence against her father, but only after huge personal sacrifice and the loss of the family empire. In the betrayal of Nicanor and Abílio, the ambush occurs at the border between the family compound and the rest of civilization, the act of violence symbolically establishes a new order of policing and power.

The violence of betrayal and revenge between brothers is once again brought forth later in the novel, as a fight erupts between Mirão and Abílio regarding Elaine, Mirão's daughter. Prompted by Abílio's previous knowledge of Elaine's affair with the pilot Dênis, Mirão's outburst is in keeping with the standard set forth by Nicanor for dealing with personal problems in the family. Likewise, while recovering in the hospital from the beating, Abílio once again summons Albano to settle his private affairs, this time contracting the hit man to murder Elaine as a way of exacting revenge on his brother (160). These moments of interpersonal violence between the brothers are crucial in the process of defining the border region in the novel, as the conflict and harsh confrontations which arise within the Menezes family, in and around the family compound at Aripuanã, later radiate and penetrate the other regions and cities in which their business operates. If the use of interpersonal violence is the modus operandi which emerges from a class of privilege (wealthy, landowning) at the base of operations, then this behavior will serve as the model for all other altercations or conflicts regarding the business beyond that base. What results is a cycle of violent behavior occurring at very personal levels all across the border region.

The fact that Brito and Albano are gainfully employed by the Brothers Menezes to continually "sort out" issues for them and these exploits are detailed throughout the

novel in different cities in Brazil's western region attests to this cyclical aspect. As does the final scene in the novel, where a scorned, pregnant Elaine approaches her sleeping father to carry out the ultimate act of vengeance with her dead lover's pistol in hand (189).[70] This cycle of domination even goes as far as impacting the romantic relationships, in which all amorous engagements are in a state of constant failure due to some link with the Brothers Menezes. Aside from the most obvious example of Elaine and Dênis' inability to unite, it is also possible to see this same affective frustration between Brito and his prostitute/madam girlfriend in São Paulo. Brito's unwillingness to abandon his job with the Menezes clan ultimately costs him his love. Additionally, Nicanor constantly extinguishes Abílio's attempts at love, as his lovers are severely beaten for maintaining homosexual relations with the twin. Taken all together, any attempts at normative, interpersonal relations are ruined due to their proximity with the drug trade in the novel.

In highlighting Aquino's creation of an alternate, symbolic border between Brazil and its neighbors to the west (Bolivia and Paraguay, in particular) through this interpersonal violence between brothers (or lovers), it is then possible to return to Valenzuela Arce's understanding of the border processes between the United States and Mexico with relation to the formation of morally ambiguous frontier spaces. Valenzuela

[70] It's difficult to determine if this final act of vengeance by Elaine fully subverts the structure of masculinity and violence highlighted by Rebecca Biron in so many other works of Latin American crime fiction. She does have a moment of redemption and agency in inverting the manhunt waged against her and her lover Dênis by seeking out her father in hiding and killing him. However, the act leaves her as a pregnant, pennyless single mother in rural Brazil. The conditions and hardship she will encounter from that moment on will once subject her to suffering and heartache. In the end, we're left wondering: Was it worth it?

Arce argues for a constantly evolving, historical mediation of the border region featuring various phases of mediation and interpretation.[71] One theme in his analysis of Mexico-US border relations revolves around the historical American perception of the border with Mexico as being a zone of tolerance, with the Mexican side serving as the site of moral ambiguity (42). Here, "La frontera, más que un sitio de confrontación moral entre mexicanos y estadunidenses, viene a ser un campo de maldad intrínseca, a cuyas puertas quedan los prejuicios . . . los estadunidenses que acuden a divertirse y a solicitar favores 'innombrables' no pueden ser juzgados por sus actos" (43). Thinking about the traditional San Diego – Tijuana dichotomy, with thousands of visitors temporarily crossing over to the Mexican side to consume the nightlife, alcohol, drugs, prostitution and other entertainment, it is possible to perceive this opposing land of fun, intrinsic evil, and unnamable favors in the American context.

While Valenzuela Arce's argument has the dominant power (the USA) defining the other (literally, the other, Mexican side of the border) as the source and site of immorality, in Aquino's construction of the border through the Menezes family and their compound, the opposite holds true. The Menezes family and the Brazilian nation, representing the dominant imperial power in the region, are shown as the purveyors of this immorality. In the economic and political relationships between Brazil, Bolivia, and Paraguay, Brazil wields the most resources and influence in determining transnational trade and relationships, thus establishing it as somewhat of an empire in the region. In

[71] Valenzuela Arce, José Manuel. "Centralidad de las fronteras. Procesos socioculturales en la frontera México-Estados Unidos." *Por las frontras del Norte: Una aproximación cultural a la frontera México-Estados Unidos*. Coor. José Manuel Valenzuela Arce. México D.F.: Consejo Nacional Para La Cultura y Las Artes, 2003. 33 – 67.

the structure of the Brazilian drug trade, this position is juxtaposed with the supplier of the cocaine (Bolivia) and the primary purchaser of the drug (Paraguay), both of which are presented in the novel as peaceful, rural sites.[72] Thus, the problems of violence and dishonesty associated with the drug trade are shown as being produced by the dominant Brazilian side of the border.[73] This is the novelty of Aquino's construction of a border space. In dialogue with both Fonseca and Melo's Corumbá, the border creates an environment for gauging the transformative nature of the drug trade as emanating from Brazil. Aquino's border allows for inferences about Brazil's neoliberal aspirations all along the western frontier through the trafficking of drugs and the rise of the Brazilian nation as an economic powerhouse.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT: CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT IN *CABEÇA A PRÊMIO*

Traversing the national boundaries on land and in the air between Bolivia, Paraguay, and Brazil, the fluid movement of people, drugs, arms, and money in fulfillment of the trafficking and exchange of cocaine in the novel occurs with limited intervention from law enforcement. Policing at the border within the novel occurs not to enforce the law, but rather to maintain the transnational trade of cocaine, reminiscent of the US-Mexico zona de tolerancia of Valenzuela Arce's study. Presenting this relative lack of judicial risk, the border once again raises the issue of impunity. While this

[72] Peaceful in the sense that the descriptions of these regions, where in the course of drug trafficking or not, do not necessarily include descriptions of violence.
[73] The word "dominant" here is understood in relation to Brazil's social, economic, and political power and influence, relative to that of Bolivia and Paraguay.

particular illicit activity falls short of the action and spectacle typically associated with urban Brazilian depictions of the trade, the intense criminal activity is instead transferred to what will be termed "maintenance" activities needed to keep the flow of drugs, arms, and money moving along Brazil's rural western border. These include a chain of murder and bloodshed occurring throughout Aquino's presentation of the region which, in turn, symbolically delineate the national roles and boundaries of the three countries presented as being involved in the trafficking of cocaine.

Narcotrafficking, in and of itself, is not the primary crime of the novel. Instead, the greatest number of criminal acts in the tale comes by way of those committed by Brito and Albano in fulfillment of orders issued by the Brothers Menezes. These actions occur as a means of regulating the political and economic networks needed to ensure pick-up and delivery of the cocaine from Bolivia to Paraguay. In this sense, the nodes of political contacts facilitating the trade hold as much significance and value as the points of purchase and sale of the cocaine. What emerges from the use of all of these points is a map of the Menezes' criminal network, seamlessly spanning transnational territories. In the two opening chapters of the novel, the reader accompanies Brito on two different contract jobs.[74]

The first chapter has Brito and his partner Albano on a stakeout attempting to identify their target and formulate a plan of action (15). It is not until the end of the chapter that it is revealed that this target is none other than the pilot, Dênis, and the location is somewhere in the interior of São Paulo at the safe house assigned to Dênis and

[74] In the context of the novel, Brito's contract jobs always consist of assassination.

Elaine for Witness Protection, though it should be noted that the details are not revealed until the end of the novel. The second chapter opens with brief description of Carlito Seixas, a 71-year-old radio station operator and DJ in the town of Apucarana, Paraná. After initiating a smear campaign against the current city mayor, Seixas receives a fatal, late night visit from Brito on behalf of the Brothers Menezes. These two murders demonstrate the use of crime as a means of enforcing order, with Dênis' death used to settle a personal and financial vendetta and Carlito Seixa's death maintaining a political status quo, and also as a means of defining Brazil's western region as a space of violence.

As the use flashbacks and the flux of time in the description of Dênis' murder warrant a more detailed outline of the crime, this analysis will begin by exploring the meanings of Carlito Seixa's murder in the beginning of the novel. The chapter opens detailing the success of a business deal, as Seixas secures a new client for ad space on his radio station and later touts, "A rádio dominava a audiência na região" (19). In doing so, he is presented as a significant force in the small-scale, local economy of Apucarana. Following this exchange, it becomes apparent through Seixas' personal reflection that he is conscious of the potential power of this media in the political sphere as well. He goes on to muse over a radio publicity campaign directed against the local mayor:

> Do meio-dia à uma, horário em que comandava um programa de variedades ao vivo, os telefones da rádio ficaram congestionados pelas ligações de ouvintes. O povo, Carlito pensou, porra era o povo manifestando apoio à cruzada que ele promovia contra o prefeito da cidade. Carlito fora informado de que o político

> planejava candidatar-se a deputado e iniciara uma agressiva campanha de denúncias pelo rádio. Era um sucesso. (19)

Through the radio program, and the forum it provides for the voicing of public criticism towards the mayor, Seixas affronts the established local hierarchy of power. If his indications are true, the mayor's aspirations for a higher political office could be put in jeopardy by the radio station. Seixas receives an anonymous phone call from a man wanting to discuss the issue assuming that the individual is there to offer a bribe in exchange for his silence, stating, "Pode parar de rodeios. Ninguém vai ficar sabendo de nada. Quanto você tem aí na pasta?" (27). Whether Seixas' campaign against the mayor was an extortion attempt or a legitimate call for legislative change never becomes clear, but his willingness, and near insistence, to hear the price for his silence implies the expectation that such an offer would be forthcoming. The individual's response, however, was not as predictable, as "O homem acionou os fechos e abriu a pasta. O radialista sorriu, vitorioso. Ia foder com todo mundo. Ainda estava sorrindo quando o homem levantou o revólver" (27). At the end of the chapter, it is revealed that the individual with the revolver is Brito, on assignment for Mirão.

In highlighting this murder early in the novel, Aquino's criminal remapping of Brazil becomes apparent. Initially, it reveals the extent of Mirão's power and influence on the local political economies of the Western regions, as the Menezes compound at Aripuanã is located almost 2400 kilometers to the north of Apuarana but he is still able to send an associate to this small town to efficiently eliminate political opposition. Further,

the exchange between Seixas and Brito reveals a nod at the popular Spanish idiom of "plata o plomo" regarding the use of physical or financial coercion in negotiating relations between trafficking organizations and political powers. While the relationship between the Menezes' and the mayor of Apuarana is not directly established, the fact that Mirão removes Seixas in order to keep the mayor in power implies collaboration between the two parties. Serving as Brito's first job for the Menezes clan, the act also represents a right of initiation for the assassin, as he proves his worth and reliability to the organization by killing Seixas without a trace. Collectively, all of these elements place the fictitious representation of the Brazilian drug trafficking, through the murder of Seixas, the participation of the Menezes compound, and the site of the crime in Arupuana, into dialogue with the realities of the history of the contemporary Latin American drug trade. The crime and the violence highlight the similarities between the less visible component of the trade, embodied by the Menezes' operations in the interior, and popular images of the traditional drug cartels like those found in Colombia in the late 1980s.[75] Likewise, the western border encompassed by the trajectory between the two towns previously mentioned creates a continuity of criminal activity, thus establishing the region as being equally as violent as the urban frontier to the East.[76] The death of Dênis takes the creation of a violent border one step further.

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[75] Like the Menezes Brothers, the real-life drug baron Pablo Escobar built a large estate in the countryside of the Antioquia region of Colombia known as Hacienda Nápoles. From his leisure compound, Escobar was able to effectively manage his networks of influence and trafficking throughout Colombia and across Latin America.

[76] The urban frontier in the East refers primarily to the mega-cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, where the drug trade is presented as violent and emanating from the favela or peripheral communities of the cities.

The murder of Dênis does not occur on a whim, nor is it strictly vindictive in the personal sense. Instead, it represents the culmination of a series of actions against the dominion of the Brothers Menezes, in particular that of Mirão. Through his relationship with Elaine, Dênis violates personal, business, and legal bonds between himself and the Brothers Menezes. After their first few sexual encounters, Dênis realizes the gravity of his relationship, stating "Dênis tentou imaginar como Mirão reagiria se fossem descobertos. Ele provavelmente ficaria puto. Muito puto. E com toda razão. Nenhum pai gostaria de saber que a filha está de caso com um piloto a serviço do tráfico. Mesmo se esse pai fosse o próprio traficante" (45). While Dênis holds a position of trust within the organization, he comes to realize that he is not an equal to the Brothers and is therefore not eligible to have a relationship with their daughter. Mirão takes additional measures to distance his daughter from the trade, continuously sending her away to cities such as Porto Velho to carry out her studies (76). That she would develop an affair with someone from his inner circle of associates permanently taints her. Further, the fact that Dênis would claim or possess something (the daughter) so valued by Mirão (his boss) without permission violates the vertical power structure of the organization and is a personal insult to the superior. This action violates the patriarchal power of the "coronelismo" parallel established earlier in this section, as the gift of lucrative employment given to Dênis by the Brothers Menezes is dishonored.

Later, with the relationship in jeopardy due to Albano's threats to expose the couple if Dênis does not perform sexual favors for him, Dênis becomes a financial liability for Brothers Menezes by stealing a shipment of cocaine. However, upon doing

so, he knows that he will be marked for death, as this is the customary way in which such transgressions are dealt with, regardless of his proximity to Elaine. As the intensity of the narrative begins to build, the complex family relationships involved in this exchange reveals the undermining power of the drug trade. The traditional family balance of father – daughter is destroyed due to the link with the trade, just as the links between the brothers Menezes are ruptured when Abílio kills Nicanor. The transformative nature of the wealth and power created in the business is shown to be personally destructive to families.

Mirão orders his best hit man to seek out and deal with Dênis and return Elaine. Again, beyond the personal insult of both of Dênis' actions (the affair and the robbery), his later actions represent a violation of the business standard involved in his role as a pilot for the organization. Finally, after escaping Mirão's first attempt on his life, Dênis commits one final insult against the Menezes' by collaborating with the police and admitting his participation in the organization as well as attesting to the overall structure and operations of the group (152 – 153). Dênis' final act of betrayal against the Brothers Menezes puts the entire operation in danger of being shut down and its members prosecuted. Collaborating with the police brings in the element of law enforcement that, to this point, has been largely absent. It marks a judicial affront to the power of the Brothers Menezes. While initially it seems as though this move will ultimately protect Dênis and Elaine from the wrath of the Menezes, it later becomes apparent that even these institutional barriers are not sufficient to impede the will of the traffickers.

For every challenge Dênis makes against the control of the Brothers Menezes at different levels of their relationship, the reaction offered by the other side remains consistent; disobedience will always be met with the application of violence. While hiding out in Paraguay after stealing the shipment of cocaine, Dênis and Elaine are located by the organization's best hired gun, Lucas Cerqueira (126 – 127). They are only able to escape after surprising the killer and murdering him. Similarly, after providing testimony against the Brothers Menezes and entering the Witness Protection program, the couple is located by Brito and Albano, only this time Dênis is eliminated by the pair. Again, not only do these attempts at murder show the reach and scope of the Menezes' criminal power in the region, they also reinforce the creation of a violent, drug border between the nations, as the use of violence as originates from Brazi but freely spills over into neighboring countries in order to protect the proper functioning of the network.

Dênis' deposition reinforces the problems with law enforcement in the novel. Throughout the work, there is a marked lack of police intervention across all levels of operations. No type of border enforcement or military entity ever impedes the movement of the drugs from Piso Firme to Paraguay. The transnational borders in the novel are marked in relation Dênis' pick-up/drop off schedule, revealing the nebulous nature of these divisions. The numerous murders committed at the hands of Brito and Albano are rarely investigated for foul play and the pair are never prosecuted for their actions. Instead, the novel presents a critique of the many failures of the judicial system in dealing with criminal organizations. Beginning with the origins of Brito and Albano, it becomes apparent that the police and the courts have failed Brazilian society, as it is revealed that

"Uma noite, Brito estava a toa numa boate de Campo Grande, Albano apareceu. Tinham trabalhado juntos na polícia, mas não se viam desde o tempo em que Brito fora expulso. Extorsão" (37). That both Brito and Albano are former police officers who were expelled from service and later become enforcers for the Menezes trafficking organization speaks to the failures of this branch of the judicial system as well as to the allure offered by the world of organized crime. This change of profession also implies the "militarization" of organized crime as the police training (location of subjects and application of violence) of these new employees is put into practice for private protection and enforcement. Later, after Dênis has testified, the speed with which the information of his whereabouts is released to the Brothers Menezes reinforces both the strength of the traffickers as well as the corruption of the courts. Through a lawyer contact in Brasília, the center of the federal courts in Brazil, the "secret" location of the couple is released to Brito and Albano. The complete disregard for due process and confidentiality in this exchange combined with the implication of an officer of the court actively supporting illegal actions (murder) completes Aquino's critique of the justice system in Brazil. Through this leak of information, it is possible to see the almost absolute power wielded by the trafficking organization, usurping all civil and institutional barriers meant to restrain this level of power. Here, Brasília is shown as being simply another site of operations, not unlike the previously mentioned Apucarana.

Throughout the work, Aquino establishes a map of criminal activities tied to the operations of the Menezes trafficking organization, predominantly along the western border. The necessity of recognizing Brazil's role as a purveyor of violent crime along

the national frontier drives the narrative, as the criminal sites in Brazil are united with the other sites of drug commerce, Piso Firme in Bolivia and an unidentified Paraguayan city. In fact, the only killing that takes place on foreign soil occurs as a result of Brazilian intervention which has spilled over to this region.[77] Furthering this claim is the presence of arms trafficking throughout the work. As has been discussed earlier, Nicanor is able to build up the family's wealth by including arms trafficking in the organization's illicit portfolio. Likewise, there is the gifting and re-gifting of a 7.65 caliber handgun between Mirão and his contacts in Bolivia, Dênis and this same contact, and, later, Dênis and Elaine. The transfer of the weapon in all of these contexts represents the movement of arms (and, to some extent, the spread of violence) from Brazil to other areas. What results is the formation of a new symbolic border in which Brazil is cast as the zone of tolerance and moral ambiguity.

CONCLUSION

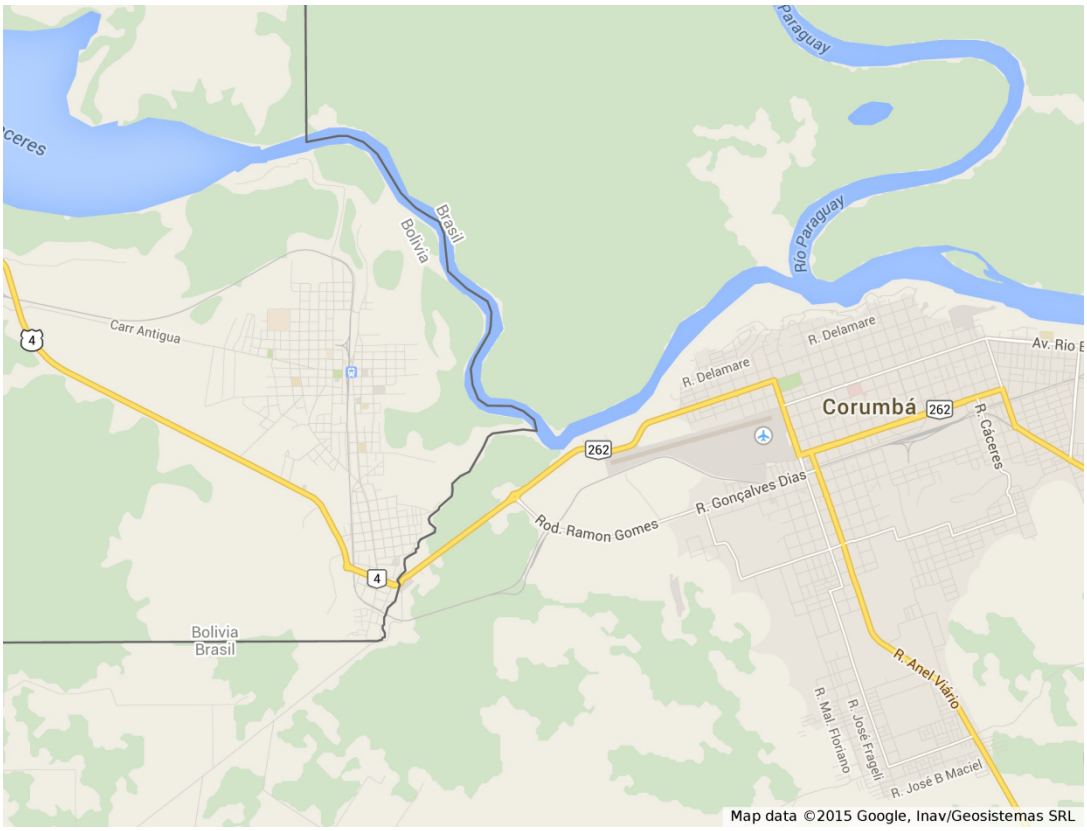
This chapter explores how relationships of power and subordination in the context of the Brazilian drug trade in fiction novels engage in a process of resignifying the moral and ethical boundaries created by the trafficking of illegal drugs. Prevailing representations of drug trafficking in Latin America are urban in nature, whereas the novels I have analyzed displace the Brazilian drug trade from an urban environment to a frontier space. I examine how authors who live in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo situate their stories on the western national border with Bolivia and Paraguay. The

[77] This occurs when Dênis and Elaine kill Lucas. See pp. 103 – 113.

agents and environments that evolve in this frontier space alter the popular articulation of the Brazilian drug trade and the significance of the border itself.

In focusing on Rubem Fonseca's *A grande arte* (1983), Patrícia Melo's *Ladrão de cadáveres* (2010), and Marçal Aquino's *Cabeça a prêmio* (2003), I show how the use of the crime novel genre for articulating the drug trade highlight expansive networks of political and moral corruption traversing the national and regional territory, often employing violence as a means of mediating relationships of power. My analysis examines the textual construction of the border and then looks at those who traverse and negotiate these transnational spaces. In doing so, I question not only the permeability of the border space but also how the narratives engage in greater issues of impunity and corruption of narcotrafficking. As with narratives of the US-Mexico border, the narratives on the Brazilian frontier draw attention to the prejudices that influence the formation of a national identity and fuel the subjugation of a misunderstood other. Further, these novels that travel to the border to tell the tale of the Brazilian drug trade reveal an entire network of influence crossing national borders and perpetuating traditional relationships of power. By expanding these networks beyond the space, it is possible to finally see the hidden participants in the trade; the businessmen, the politicians, the police, the lawyers, the cattle farmers, as opposed to the dealers and killers which have dominated public perception of the trade for so long, thus redefining the moral boundaries of criminality and the significance of participation in the trade.

Map 3: Map of Brazil. Source – Perry Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin. Public domain. Available online < http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia14/brazil_sm_2014



Map 4: Map of Corumbá. Source – Google Maps. Public domain. Available online. <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Corumbá+-+MS,+Brazil/@-19.0283903,-57.6461406,13z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x9387a076798e7565:0x5e7c4a2bdbaeab6>

CHAPTER 3: ETHNICITY AND LOCATION IN BOLIVIAN NOVELS OF THE DRUG TRADE

For centuries, the practice of the *akhulli* has played a central role in facilitating discussion among friends, travelers, and strangers, alike, throughout the Andean region. Beginning with the selection and then exchange of 3 to 4 flawless coca leaves, the reception and chewing then opens a forum in which the participants dialogue and reflect on any pending issues or simply the day's activities.[78] In preparing to discuss the development of Bolivian narratives, it seems only fitting to begin with a sort of metaphorical *akhulli*, in which this chapter will offer up three distinct works of Bolivian fiction for review. The traditional role of coca in the Andean region, as an economic currency, a social token, and a bridge to the spiritual world, continues to serve as the cultural backbone for the region. The development and use of coca's illicit byproduct, cocaine, threatens to destabilize the modern economic and political integrity of this same area.

Academic work in the social sciences has made it possible to trace Bolivia's role as a producer of coca for the Incan empire and Spanish crown and, later, of raw materials for cocaine paste production in the contemporary drug trade. Studies that explore the fictionalized, representation of these trades have been less visible, stemming from the difficulty in asserting the presence of a dominant tradition of narcofiction in Bolivia, comparable to that produced in Colombia and Mexico. Yet there exist novels that

[78] An Aymara word meaning to chew coca, often while taking a break from work.

incorporate the reality of the Bolivian drug trade in their plots which merit further review. The following chapter focuses on the texts of three of the leading fiction writers on the topic: Alison Spedding, Hugo Carvalho Oliva, and Tito Gutiérrez Vargas. In examining these authors' respective works on the subject, *El viento de la cordillera: un thriller de los 80* (2003), *La conspiración de los viejos* (2011), and *Mariposa blanca* (1990), I focus on how regionalism and ethnicity create uniquely Bolivian narratives regarding the local drug trade.

The story of the Bolivian drug trade is one of many different settings, with the Yungas region outside of the capital of La Paz, the eastern lowlands of the departments of Beni and Santa Cruz, and the Chapare of Cochabamba, constituting primary nodes of production and distribution of coca for either traditional use or as raw materials for cocaine paste production. Outside of the drug trade, these differing sites also carry equally complex ethnic situations. These regional and ethnic differences have garnered increased attention from authors portraying the narrative of the trade, in particular within the works included in this chapter. I show how the treatment of region and ethnicity articulates differing narratives of the drug trade. The works included in this study evoke memories of the "boom" years of the drug trade – the decade of the 1980s – and highlight the most emblematic moments in Bolivia's narco-history. Through the different perspectives provided by the novels, the chapter shows how the unique elements of Bolivian reality form a narrative unlike that produced in other areas of Latin America. It also illustrates how the representations of the trade vary depending on the social classes of the characters represented.

ALISON SPEDDING'S *EL VIENTO DE LA CORDILLERA*: *UN THRILLER DE LOS 80*

"Coca no es cocaína"

During the 1980s, Bolivian composer and songwriter José Jach'a Flores penned the song "La Mentirosita" in the *morenada* style of his home state of Oruro, famous for its traditional Carnaval celebration and parade. The song became very popular, and continues to be covered and recorded today, primarily due to its engaging chorus, boldly stating, "Coca no es cocaína / Coca no es cocaína / Es la hoja sagrada."[79] In these lyrics, Jach'a Flores synthesized one of the most complex political and cultural conflicts occurring in Bolivia, one that continues to polarize the Bolivian state and the international community. The affirmation that coca is not cocaine and that it is instead a sacred object is the battle cry for supporters of traditional cultivation of the plant, including current president Evo Morales, himself a former coca farmer.80 Jach'a Flores' message comes in response to the fact that the traditional role of the coca leaf has been threatened by the anti-narcotics operations executed by the United States that initially sought to eradicate the cultivation of the plant.[81] The Yungas has been an area in which the coca has been traditionally cultivated and where this tension between coca and

[79] For more on the life of José Jach'a Flores, see http://www.pucarani.net/patrimonio-cultural/reportaje-5/
[80] Morales' rise to power is closely linked to the *cocalero* (coca growers) movement. Before becoming a leading political figure for the Movement for Socialism (MAS) party in Bolivia, Morales was heavily involved in coca activism, including serving in various secretary positions within the Cocalero Union.
[81] In 1988, the Bolivian government enacted the Law 1008. This law tried to end illicit cocaine production by demarcating specific regions of the country as traditional zones of production and exempting these areas from persecution. The law also stipulated that all other zones of production be eradicated or subject to crop substitution. American forces used this law to provide military support for erradication efforts.

cocaine became more evident. Alison Spedding studies the Yungas region of Bolivia as the focus of her academic ethnographic and anthropological research, but also evokes the region as the backdrop for her Andean trilogy, a collection of works of fiction highlighting the importance of coca throughout history.

Alison Spedding, Coca, and the Bolivian Yungas

Alison Spedding originally arrived in Bolivia to conduct her dissertation research on coca production. She wrote an ethnography on the impact on and importance of coca cultivation in Yungas communities. Her work, *Wachu Wachu: cultivo de coca e identidad en los Yunkas de La Paz* (1994), helped establish her as one of the foremost authorities on the subject. Spedding reveals how coca is a vital component for identity in the Yungas. Among its many definitions, coca is linked to cultural, spiritual, economic identities for these communities. Spedding's critique of the Bolivian government's repression against coca farmers in much of her academic work and public appearances, prior to the rise of the Evo Morales regime, has led to personal persecution, even resulting in a false drug conviction in 1998, leading to 2 years of incarceration.[82] Through all of this adversity, she has shown an unwavering commitment to chronicling the world of Yungas coca in her fight for equality, justice, and accurate reporting on the

[82] For a brief write-up of Spedding's prison ordeal, see the following article from *The Guardian*, December 8th, 1999: http://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/dec/08/bolivia.simonhattenstone

realities of the coca farmer.[83] In addition to this work, she has written extensive fiction on the topic. In her novels, Spedding stands out as the only foreign-born (British) fiction writer exploring the complexities of the lives of the coca growers in the area. By creating a trilogy of fiction novels centering on the topic, Spedding explores the historical and cultural archeology of coca identity across centuries and transnational borders. Polit Dueñas has noted that, "En las tres novelas la coca es el elemento que articula las tramas, establece tensiones de poder y define a los personajes. En conjunto, las obras son una suerte de arqueología de la coca como elemento constructivo de formas de dominación y de resistencia en el mundo andino" ("Coca y utopía" 338). Again, the term archeology of coca is mobilized with reference to the triology to show the cultural history of the coca leaf, production, and commercialization, and how it symbolizes both tradition and adaptability in the communities, surpassing the limits of academic study. Likewise, the varying times presented in the trilogy – colonial period, cocaine boom, and sci-fi future – highlight the continuing significance of this process across generations. The discourses present in this trilogy resonate many of the arguments in favor of traditional coca cultivation found at the local level, but come into conflict with the official State discourse surrounding such cultivation, specifically at the time of the novels' publications.[84]

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[83] Some of her other studies include: *Chulumani flor de clavel: transformaciones urbanas y rurales, 1998 – 2012* (2013), *Kawsachun coca: economía campesina cocalera en los Yungas y el Chapare* (2004), and *En defensa de la hoja de coca* (2003), among others.

[84] Alison Spedding's Andean Trilogy consists of *Manuel y Fortunato: una picaresca andina* (1996), *El viento de la cordillera: un thriller de los 80* (2003), and *De cuando en cuando Saturnina* (2004). These novels are published after more than two decades of anti-narcotics operations in Bolivia, which focused efforts on supply-side reductions with the consent of the Bolivian government. These operations targeted the Yungas and Chapare regions.

The shift in Bolivian production of coca from traditional use to raw material for cocaine production represents a relatively small chapter in the millennial history of coca, but has had the most enduring impact on the livelihood of traditional coca production. Outside of the Yungas, the development of coca as a raw material for paste production can be viewed in relation to the drastic changes that took place with the rise of Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) political party during the 1950s agrarian reform. The National Revolution of 1952, often referred to as simply the Revolución Nacional, promised sweeping changes in democratic participation of all citizens, agricultural reform, and education, as well as the nationalization of many of the nation's natural resources, primarily in the mining sector. The MNR assumed control during the revolution and would remain in power until 1964, when a coup d'état brought down the regime. One important component in the MNR's agricultural reform was the colonization of underutilized regions of the country, including the Chapare region of Cochabamba. This region was to be the centerpiece of the MNR's national project of internal colonization and economic development.

Throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, foreign aid propped up the MNR-controlled government settlement projects, agricultural initiatives, and the development of a transportation infrastructure in the eastern departments such as Santa Cruz as well as the Chapare.[85] These elements, combined with low rates of prosecution and incarceration of

[85] The MNR has historically been one of Bolivia's most powerful political parties. Following its loss of authority in 1964, the party would return to power by supporting the rise of the dictator Hugo Banzer in 1971. In chapters 6 and 7 of Paul Gootenberg's *Andean Cocaine* (2008), the author provides an in-depth study of the development of Bolivian cocaine production and the involvement of government officials, including MNR party members.

known cocaine producers, generated an environment in which cocaine production boomed in the newly colonized settlements (Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine* 295 - 296). The landed class and traditional cattle bourgeoisie of the departments of Beni and Santa Cruz, ethnically and geographically distanced from the Andean communities of the North, increasingly invested and participated in the growing illegal trade, purchasing coca plantations and processing labs across the Chapare in the neighboring department of Cochabamba. With better roads connecting the Chapare to the lowlands of the East, combined with increased demand for cocaine from Brazil and abroad, the Eastern departments became hubs for transport and sale of cocaine paste, completely removed from the traditional concept of Andean coca (Gootenberg 285). While traditional cultivation and use of coca in the Yungas region remained consistent during this same period, the appeal of the fast wealth generated by cocaine paste production resulted in increased participation of Yungeños in paste production. With the peak of production and commerce of cocaine paste occurring throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, increased military presence and training from the American war on drugs during this time ushered in a new era of Bolivian anit-narcotics enforcement.

The most damning enforcement came in 1988 with the enactment of the Law 1008. This law intended to bring about an end to illicit cocaine production by demarcating specific regions of the country as traditional zones of production and exempting these areas from persecution. The law also stipulated that all other zones of production be eradicated or subject to crop substitution programs. Additionally, the authorities established a limit on the amount of coca (in tons) which could be produced in

the traditional zones (*Kawsachun*, 73). Immediately after its enactment, the Law 1008 proved unfit and ineffective for the Bolivian coca reality for numerous reasons.

The main problem with the process of demarcation is that no accurate mapping of the zones of production existed, resulting in almost arbitrary distinctions between what is considered a traditional zone and that which is not. The restrictions and eradication programs of Law 1008 have unfairly persecuted traditional producers which exist beyond the legislated zones of acceptable coca production, and put the continued survival of this part of Andean life into jeopardy. Further, the law did not account for the growing traditional consumption of coca that had also spread beyond the traditional zones. Throughout Bolivia, including the tropical Eastern departments, consumption of coca leaf had increased tremendously, resulting in amplified demand for raw coca leaves well beyond the weight restrictions set forth by Law 1008. In summary, Law 1008 came about as a stop-gap measure meant to show some progress in controlling the illicit drug trade and assure continued military and financial support from the United States in the war on drugs. However, the administrative measures it enacted revealed a bureaucratic arbitrariness completely devoid of any conscious understanding of the function and importance of coca in Bolivia and neighboring countries. It is during this era of ambiguity and conflict, as the paste production boom collided with the push for control from law enforcement during the decade of the 1980s, that Alison Spedding situates *El viento de la cordillera*. This novel is the second installment of Spedding's trilogy set in the Bolivian Andes.

But why such an emphasis on this single plant? Among Quechua and Aymara speaking communities alike, the coca leaf has been a central element in conceiving and accessing mystical life, as well as an essential component in the formation of an Andean identity. In *Manuel y Fortunato: una picaresca andina*, the first novel in the trilogy, Spedding integrates the creation myth of the coca leaf into her fiction, as one protagonist explains to his son-in-law that the coca leaf was a gift from the heavens, sent to alleviate starving and fatigue for a family that had fled to the mountains for protection from invaders (103-104). Here, not only is coca seen as necessary for physical survival in the harsh environment, it becomes a crucial symbol of identity and resistance for the people of this region. The chewing of the coca leaf is a fundamental part of funeral proceedings, as leaves are distributed during a wake to those who have come to pray for the dead, assisting in the collective mourning of the community. The coca plant itself is seen as a living being passing through stages of life; young plants require close and constant attention, like a human baby, until their first pruning, at which point they are seen able to produce independently like a young adult (Spedding, *Wachu* 226). Together with the spiritual realm, coca has formed part of the Andean economy for centuries before the arrival of the Spaniards. In the 17th century, coca was one of the first Andean products to circulate freely throughout the colonies in open mercantile exchange, solidifying the base for the economy through trade and payment of tributes.

In the 18th century, large colonial plantations were maintained and continued to contribute to the Andean economy throughout the independence movement (Spedding,

Kawsachun 190).[86] For the early Spanish and Catholic authorities in the colonies, the prosperity of the coca trade created a schizophrenic relationship with the plant, as officials openly condemned the worship of coca by calling it idolatry, but reaped tremendous profits through the collection of tithes and tributes from the coca plantations and commercialization (*Kawsachun* 57 - 67). The economic significance of coca was essential for negotiating power with the Spanish authorities as well as establishing the early labor and trade markets. From farmers to miners to merchants, millions of laborers consumed the leaf as part of the everyday work life. The physical, biochemical ability of the leaf to mitigate hunger and fatigue during work allowed for laborers to do well even under the harshest of conditions (i.e. mining and farming) while the combined spiritual / religious aspects helped establish and maintain the value of the leaf as an important economic commodity across the centuries and across national boundaries. The geographic and regional differences of the sites of production carry equally disparate political histories, well before the boom in the cocaine trade hit this country. The fact that all three of Alison Spedding's novels in the coca trilogy center their narratives on the community of the Bolivian Yungas is not born of mere coincidence or convenience. Spedding highlights the necessity of linking traditional coca to this specific region as a center point for her "archeology" of coca, fed by both her academic expertise and cultural knowledge of the Yungas.

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[86] Citing María Rostworowski de Diez Canesco's 1989 essay, "Plantaciones prehispánicas de coca en la vertiente del Pacífico," Alison Spedding references archeological evidence showing coca leaf deposits along the Peruvian coast as early as 1000 B.C. and traces its history in the Yungas.

So how does this area differ from the rest of Bolivia? Situated just 50 miles from the Bolivian capital of La Paz, the Yungas has warm year-round temperatures, abundant rainfall, lush vegetation and rich biodiversity. The Yungas' tropical valleys form part of the Southern Andes, yet offer a stark contrast to the typical Andean images, especially when compared to a city like La Paz, which is flanked by the snow-capped Illimani peak and the rugged Altiplano. These valleys have long been associated with the production of the highest quality coca for chewing. This small, sweet variety of the leaf was always highly coveted for both personal consumption and religious purposes. Traditionally an agricultural zone, the Yungas continued to be the main coca region even as other cash crops, such as coffee and citric fruits, were introduced. However, due to the region's geographic isolation and a climate prone to producing illnesses such as malaria, steady laborers were a difficult commodity to obtain, often requiring workers to be brought in from the Altiplano or other urban centers. To compensate for this shortage, temporary or transient laborers were often lent out between plantations through an exchange known as *ayni*. Here, one valuable commodity (i.e. coca) is exchanged for an equally valuable commodity in the community (i.e. laborers). The *ayni* helps maintain a balance of commerce and community harmony through the exchange of labor (Spedding, *Wachu* 17). This practice began centuries ago and *ayni* continues to be an indispensable economic component in the Yungas in the cultivation of coca, one which would also be adapted during the move to the production of cocaine paste.

The Andean Trilogy

Written over the span of a decade, the novels in this trio incorporate the factual findings of her research as an anthropologist to accurately depict the many cultural practices encountered in the field. Themes of resistance, survival, and tradition contribute to an overarching thesis in the trilogy, praising the richness of the Aymara of the Yungas across multiple generations while also distinguishing their keen ability to adapt to changes in society and politics. What results is a panoramic retelling of the story and life of coca through fiction. This deliberate turn from academic to fiction writing, especially in the case of a foreigner trained in formal academic writing and research, cannot be glossed over. That Spedding would actively seek out different genres of fiction speaks to the complexity of the issue. The picaresque, the thriller, and science fiction, as literary genres in the trilogy, arise at important chronological and historical moments in the life of coca, depicting colonial turmoil over its significance, military intervention in its repression, and possible future commercial transport (Polit Dueñas, "Coca y utopia" 337 – 338). The turn to fiction enables the author to account for the intricacies and nuances that lie beyond the strictly anthropological or ethnographic gaze. Though Spedding had dabbled in fiction writing prior to the Andean triology, this was the first fiction project to tackle such intensely cultural, political, and ethnic subject matter.[87] Throughout the three works, Spedding grounds her stories using informative descriptions

[87] Alison Spedding's previous work includes the *A Walk in the Dark* trilogy, a collection of speculative fiction consisting of *The Road and the Hills* (1986), *A Cloud Over Water* (1988), and *The Streets of the City* (1988).

of the actual, traditional role of coca in the Yungas borrowed directly from her research. Additionally, the novels highlight three distinct historical moments in lifespan of the coca trade. What results is a project that praises and defends coca in Bolivia as time-honored tradition, but also recognizes the temptations and ambiguities created by the market for cocaine paste. Another unifying element between all works in the trilogy is the reappearance of a strong female protagonist known as Satuka as well as a focus on the varying roles coca plays in the communities across history.

The first of the series, entitled *Manuel y Fortunato: una picaresca andina*, is published in 1997 and presents a historical fiction adopting the style of the Spanish picaresque novel. Set in the time of Spanish colonial rule, Spedding traces the rise of Manuel as *cacique* of his community of Oyune through the transregional and transnational exchange of coca for commerce and tribute. The story also focuses on the tale of Fortunato, the *picaro* or rascal of the novel, an orphan who navigates the social order of the day through a blend of manipulation, street smarts, and curiosity, eventually courting and marrying Celestina, Manuel's daughter. Satuka is at the crux of both tales, helping Manuel fully assume his given role as casique and grow the coca business and, later, accepting the union between Celestina and Fortunato due to the young man's ability to read and write. Even when faced with increased pressure from the colonial and church authorities to abandon their traditions, a pressure culminating in the public burning of the community's mummified ancestors, the resilience of the Aymara perseveres.

The final novel in the trilogy, *De cuando en cuando Saturnina*, released in 2004, is a science fiction work that speculates on the possibilities of an Andean nation

completely ruled and inhabited by indigenous people, embracing centuries-old traditions in a hypermodern realm. Here, the reader encounters a Bolivia in which all white citizens of European-descent have been exiled and the eastern, tropical portion of the country has been granted autonomy. International embargos from the Chinese and the United States, now referred to as the "Estados Jodidos," or Fucked States, prevent free trade and movement, both international and intergalactic, for everyone except those pertaining to a trade organization of highly skilled pilots. Again, Satuka's role in the novel is essential, as she is one of the few pilots pertaining to the organization and possessing the authority to navigate the troublesome embargos and political obstacles.

El viento de la cordillera: un thriller de los 80, published in 2003, provides the most realistic contribution to Spedding's trilogy. As the title implies, the novel is written in the style of a thriller. While classical crime fiction relies on the reason, methodical processes, and the intellectual capacity of a detective or officer to solve a crime or mystery (i.e. Sherlock Holmes), the thriller, as dictated by the style of the "King of the Thrillers," author Edgar Wallace, present "a reassuring world, for the hero always wins in the end, crime never pays, love finds a way, and the heroine is always saved from worse than death… [starting] a story, stopping at a climactic point and starting another, apparently independent story,- story chains would alternate until a resolution occurred" (*Mystery and Suspense* 945). We are introduced to Narciso; a young resident of the city of La Paz, who escapes to Satuka's farm in the rural Yungas as a way of fleeing from hitmen following a failed drug deal. Narciso is taken in as a hired worker, or *ayni*, by a local matriarch and plantation owner known as Satuka. Initially helping maintain

Satuka's crops, Narciso later becomes involved in the production of cocaine paste on a neighboring plantation. The action comes by way of police chases and raids, as Narciso flees from anti narcotics police raiding maceration pits and, later, when Satuka and her daughter Celestina hitch a ride on a truck transporting cocaine paste fleeing from the police. While the object of analysis for this chapter is Spedding's second novel in the trilogy, *El viento de la cordillera: Un thriller de los 80*, a brief review of the other two works in the collection may help to highlight the central themes of her project.

As an *ayni*, Narciso becomes our guide in the Yungas; showing the intricacies of traditional coca leaf production and agriculture, while also revealing the growth of the production of cocaine paste fueling the drug trade of the 1980s. My study of Spedding's novel focuses on the three elements that recast it as a uniquely Bolivian narco-narrative. These are the *ayni* as a guide and witness to the changes in the Yungas, the "Outsiders" (i.e. Gringos and Police) as the purveyors of the cocaine trade, and the Satuka as a symbol of resistance. This final element, the presentation of the Satuka, provides a rich narration of the negotiation of the traditional and illicit applications of coca. This occurs through the descriptions of Satuka's home and fields; and the network of exchange within the community.

The *Ayni*

Throughout the Andean region, the tradition of *ayni* has been practiced for centuries, creating an essential system of collective labor exchange. Though originally a resident of La Paz, it is through *ayni* that Narciso becomes a fully-integrated member of

the Yungas community. It is also in this role that he becomes our guide in the novel. Through Narciso, the reader is able to access Satuka's home and farm, as the story begins with his escape from La Paz to the Yungas. Narciso opens the novel riding on a truck and telling an unknown interlocutor the story of an apparent problem at a bakery, which leads to his present troubles. Upon reaching Satuka's home, Narciso is housed, allowed to rest, fed, and then put to work. Narciso's role as a gatekeeper for the reader is activated, as it is through his immediate work on the plantation that the normal, agricultural activities of the Yungas are highlighted.

Satuka's home and the surrounding farm are all narrated from Narciso's perspective. He is presented as a novice at hard labor, requiring the close supervision of Segundino, his interlocutor on the truck and Satuka's main laborer. This agricultural apprenticeship parallels the reader's own sense of inexperience in the Yungas and reliance on Narciso's narrative filter to enter this world. He must be initiated into the labor, as Segundino guides him to the fields; "El camino subía en un zigzagueteo de zanjas, piedras, lodo y mala yerba, y subía y subía. Narciso no veía casi nada más que las abarcas… y los pantalones arremangados del Segundino, trepando interminablemente delante suyo" (*El viento* 8). There is a sense of childish rebellion in this trek, as Narciso's pampered city ways seemingly frustrate both his assimilation into the wilderness and his submission to Segundino's domain over this rocky labyrinth. The same frustration reemerges after completion of the first few days of work, consisting mostly of removing weeds from various plots, when Narciso expresses that "Parecía que había bastante por desyerbar en los Yungas. A veces Narciso pensaba que no había más

que desyerbar" (9).[88] What emerges is a Yungas community strongly tied to the hard labors of agriculture. This direct connection to the land and the desire to maintain agriculture on small landholdings forms the first facet of Yungueño identity. With the work completed, both the reader and Narciso cross the first threshold into the community and Narciso's worth and initiation are evaluated during a brief dialogue between unknown speakers; "-¿Y cómo va ese joven que han traído de La Paz? –Trabaja nomás. -¿Avanza grande? – Chakra será ps todavía. – Si, chakra está todavía" (9 – 10). As explained in the footnotes of the text, *chakra* in Aymara means a novice or someone who is incompetent and without having acquired experience. Spedding's use of Aymara in the dialogue and the incorporation of an Aymara-Spanish glossary and footnotes in the novel provide an important identity marker for the community being portrayed. In this sense, the lack of knowledge of the Aymara language makes the reader just as "chakra" as Narciso.

Throughout the novel, Spedding continually incorporates words from Aymara into the narrative. At times, entire sentences of dialogue are left in Aymara, forcing the non-Aymara reader to rely on the author's translation for full comprehension of the text. Spedding's use of these native words reinforces the construction of a Yungueño identity. The authenticity of language is stressed further through the incorporation of the spoken accent of the region, as sentences are transcribed in the text to maintain the sonority of the sentences as they would be pronounced in the Yungas. Just as Narciso's role as the

[88] While common to most forms of agriculture in the region, the clearing and weeding of the land is particularly important in preparation for planting coca plants. For a complete description of the process, see Alison Spedding's essay, "The Coca Field as a Total Social Fact" in Léons and Sanabria's *Coca, Cocaine, and the Bolivian Reality* (1997).

ayni provides a physical, visual access to Satuka's community, the use of the native language provides a cultural, aural access to this world. The reader must participate in an active reading of the text, physically gazing at and referencing the footnotes and glossary, to complete the narrative. This use of language in the novel allows the reader a heightened level of accessibility to the Yungas community and later adds to a greater understanding of the many facets forming identity in the region.

While Narciso's spontaneous move to the countryside provides humor and physical descriptions of the Yungas, his role as a laborer provides insight regarding the movement of temporary labor populations to the Yungas. The practice of *ayni* accommodates the pool of workers fed by migrants fleeing the shortage of job opportunities in cities like La Paz. This exchange of workers occurs in both the formal and informal markets of the Yungas. Narciso comes to represent this pool of laborers, as is evident when Satuka lends him out to Don Freddy, a neighbor, for the purpose of working in a maceration pit for processing coca into cocaine paste. Narciso's first visit to the pits with Segundino occurs through a coordinated exchange of labor, in which Satuka and Don Freddy discuss and agree upon having the two men help in the pits (*El viento* 17 – 21. However, Narciso and Segundino's later attempt to create their own pit for foreign, American clients goes against the concept of *ayni*, as it is driven by greed and addiction and lacks the balance of exchange within the community. It is an action not mediated by the community but rather outside entities, highlighting how the boom of the cocaine trade of the 1980s created divisions within the community.

As a celestial punishment, Narciso's attempted trade results in a raid from the anti-narcotics police. Spedding uses the foreign clients to introduce a commercial demand for drugs that superimposes itself on the traditional community in the Yungas. However, their presence and way of doing business is out-of-sync with the local economy and society, leading to their eventual arrest and also the corruption of Narciso and Segundino. Spedding's depiction of contemporary *ayni* reinforces a regional identity of the Yungas community in the novel as one which is able to adjust to the changing social, political, and economic conditions surrounding coca production. The *ayni* becomes an ambiguous modern labor, equally employable in the production of traditional crops or in the production of cocaine paste.

Returning to Narciso's role as a guide, it is through him that the matter of local drug consumption is introduced into the narrative. When describing his previous life in La Paz to Segundino, Narciso describes himself as a "satuco," which in Aymara translates to someone who is addicted to cocaine paste, this in contrast to the word "Satuka," which is slang for cocaine paste. Prior to leaving the city, Narciso openly smoked cocaine-laced cigarettes along el Prado, one of the city's main boulevards (13). He goes on to describe his crew of fellow users and La Paz's "Yungas" street, the neighborhood where drugs were easily available. Later in the novel, the pair travels to La Paz and there now, in Narciso's hometown, *he* becomes the teacher and Segundino the novice apprentice in navigating this other "Yungas."

Spedding's wordplay in this section is a playful yet direct assessment of the drug problem in Bolivia. The real Yungas does not have such a visible, explicit trade and

consumption of cocaine, whereas the "Yungas" street in the heart of La Paz is a primary zone of drug consumption and abuse. The urban underbelly of the city seduces Segundino, attracted not only by the physical high of the drug, but also by the seemingly endless demand for the product by the "gringo" tourists the pair constantly encounter. As Narciso reveals the metropolis to both the reader and Segundino, the capital city is cast not as the capital, a center of culture, and prosperity, but rather a bleak landscape of urban moral decay and vice through its drug pushers and users. This account counters the popular discourse of the war on drugs, both locally and internationally, which focuses solely on producers in Bolivia without taking into account the foreign demand that also creates local markets for the consumption of these drugs.

The humor present in this chapter is an important element in Spedding's work. The literary banter between the satuco / satuka and the Yungas street / Yungas valley provide enough levity in the text to prevent the discussion of cocaine in 1980s Bolivia from becoming too heavy and trite. While Spedding's assertions about the production of cocaine paste are accurate and deliberate, she still manages to find humor in the problem as well. In a comical scene from their trip to La Paz, Narciso teaches Segundino how to snort cocaine, stating:

> He sacao mis llaves, he abierto el sobre. Lindo pollo, che, brillando. He metiw la llave como pala, uno, dos. El Segundino me miraba. "¿No sabes jalar siempre?" ley dicho. "Bueno. Tapáte la nariz, de un lado… yo te voy alcanzar… ¡mierda!" Justo cuando yo estaba acercando la llave cargada el cojudo había estornudao! Se

> ha volao de la llave, la mitad del sobre más ¡Carajo! Ley reñiw. "Disculpa, Disculpa," decía. "A ver esta vez no lo voy echar…" (35)

The guide Narciso awkwardly initiates Segundino into the world of recreational drug use in the national capital, but the countryman has trouble assimilating. As with the wordplay, the scene of Segundino sneezing away the cocaine provides just enough humor to keep the story light and entertaining while still presenting the realities of the contemporary drug situation in Bolivia. With Narciso's introduction of the many aspects of the Yungas coca trade complete, it is now possible to examine these foreign elements in the novel.

The Outsiders

Strangers and foreigners in *El viento de la cordillera* are presented as threats to the peace of the Yungas community, either by introducing illicit activity or through violent interventions intended to stop this illicit activity. In particular, the American drug addicts present in the novel represent the outside demand for the cocaine paste fueling the boom in production. For example, during Narciso and Segundino's visit to La Paz, a pair of "gringos" are the ones who initially provide them with the cocaine for Segundino's first experience with drugs, but then immediately turn the tables on the pair upon learning of their connection to the Yungas, asking "¿No sabes donde hay *satuca*?" (36). Soon after, the four agree on a deal where the gringos will provide the money needed to produce cocaine paste and Narciso and Segundino will provide the product. Demand and consumption for cocaine paste stems from foreign entities. While there is an element of

local drug consumption present in the work, as evidenced by Narciso's retelling of his tumultuous past, the bulk of the problem comes from abroad. Upon meeting up at a hotel to deliver the order, the older of the two gringos makes his drug addiction obvious, as just moments after Segundino brings him a small sample of the paste he begins rolling cocaine cigarettes. The gringo's ravenous, exaggerated demand for cocaine reveals Spedding's challenge to the rhetoric surrounding cocaine in Bolivia, which focuses on the issue of production rather than consumption. Here, the US demand prompts production, with the gringos willing to travel all the way to the rural Yungas to satiate their addiction. These encounters highlight an important discursive position in the novel.

Aside from associating cocaine paste production to foreign demand, the foreigners in the novel in no way connect to the traditional use of the coca leaf. Whereas American authorities make little distinction between coca and cocaine, *El viento* clearly tries to distance the two by establishing a new rationale; cocaine is noxious and equated to US consumers whereas coca is healthy and essential to the balance of life in the Yungas. Even when cocaine paste production is present in the Yungas community, it only works out when it is in harmony with the traditional values and systems of that community (i.e. the appropriate use of *ayni*). That local coca growers in this community would choose to enter the drug trade comes off as a sign of their ability to adapt to market conditions and take advantage of a business opportunity to ensure the survival of their livelihood. More than just an identitary characteristic, this adaptability is an economic survival tactic developed over years of experience in the market of coca production.

The other "outsiders" in the novel are the anti-narcotics officers who raid the maceration pits and later chase the gringos through the Yungas. While absent throughout most of the novel, when the authorities do appear, they do so with violence. After escaping the raid under the cover of night, Narciso observes the interrogation tactics used by the soldiers against a friend:

> Arrastraron al Lagarto hasta hacerle arrodillar al borde del rio. Le alumbraron con dos linternas. El teniente contaba "Uno, dos… ¡adentro!" Dos soldados agarraron al preso, le echaron adelante y hundieron su cabeza debajo de las aguas. El Lagarto pataleaba furiosamente. Dos más lo agarraron por las piernas. Arqueaba todo su cuerpo. Burbujas salían a la superficie. "Sácale", dijo el teniente. Alzaron al Lagarto chorreando agua y boqueando. "¿Ya has recordado donde están los dueños?" (50)

The scene reveals the torture the soldiers employ against Lagarto in order to obtain information about the owner of the pit. The cynical repetition of the question regarding Lagarto's memory exposes a dark cruelty and penchant for violence by the authorities. The Lieutenant's later insistence on Satuka being the owner of the pit leads to an illegal search of her estate. The police disregard individual and community rights by violently forcing their prisoner to provide false testimony and by invading Satuka's unattended home, revealing a tendency to operate outside of the law. As with the gringos, the outside elements associated with the drug trade, in this case law enforcement, come off as

harmful to the community and bearing no relation to the traditional structures long-present in that environment.

Satuka's home and farm are ransacked and her valuables are stolen, serving as an attack on her livelihood. However, as with Narciso and Segundino's transgression against the community order, the Lieutenant is later punished for upsetting the balance as he is bitten in the face by a snake protecting Satuka's property (52). The absurdity of a snake, Satuka's hidden pet, biting an official in the face reveals another moment of macabre humor in the novel, as the death of the Lieutenant seems to be the only way to detain the halt the violent incursions made by the police. The soldiers do not function as representatives or enforcers of the law, but rather violators not only of the laws of the state, but customs, rules that underlay Yunga society.

While the death of the Lieutenant may balance the offence made against Satuka in her community, the action also creates a crisis for her, as she is later charged with owning and operating the pit as well as being responsible for the soldier's death. Now, Satuka is forced to engage the State on its own terms by hiring a lawyer and navigating the judicial system. Through law enforcement and the judicial system, the war on drugs is presented as a broken system, prone to just as much, if not more, corruption and collusion than the drug trade it is supposedly suppressing. The novelty of Spedding's narrative of this bleak trade lies in the resistance and opposition she provides by way of the many local Aymara practices associated with coca production. Satuka is taken to the capital to stand trial, Spedding inverts the role of the outsider as the Satuka becomes the outcast in the judicial realm and must find a way to subvert the system for her own gain and survival.

Gender and Ethnicity in the Yungas

Across Spedding's Andean trilogy, the Satuka character presents the most nuanced representation of the Aymara of the Bolivian Yungas. This strong, sharp-witted female protagonist most effectively encompasses the various facets of this Bolivian countryside while also challenging the contemporary political and economic environment. In the novels, Satuka is firmly grounded in the traditions of her people yet also displays a future-facing gaze and foresight capable of adjusting to an ever-changing society. Further, her business savvy and movement (both commercial and geographical) in *El viento de la cordillera* stands out, as it is through this occupation that Spedding disputes the growing cocaine trade in the Yungas, complicated by the ambiguity surrounding Satuka's own dubious participation in the production and sale of cocaine paste. Through these elements, Satuka's character becomes a metaphor for the coca leaf itself.

Throughout the Andean world, women's participation in daily commerce is highly visible. For example, a common fixture in many markets in the Bolivian highlands is the figure of the *chola*-woman tending the market stall.[89] Female commercial participation beyond this ground-level market role, though less visible, is an important component to Andean economic life. In her essay, "Cocataki, Taki-Coca," Spedding highlights growing women's participation in coca commerce by serving as

[89] The word *chola* stems from the old Spanish word *chula*, which was used to refer to women from the neighboring towns of Madrid. In Bolivia, the word often refers to the indigenous women of the mountainous regions of the country. For more on *chola* identity, see Gonzalo Iñiguez Vaca Guzman's *La chola paceña: su dinámica social*.

"capitalist" traders, those who build up capital through coca accumulation and reinvestment in local agriculture and transport. She notes that these "capitalist" traders include many women and that increased access to capital to purchase vehicles has increased the quantity these women capitalist traders can transport to market (Spedding 124). Spedding's observations bring to light several key changes which influenced women's economic mobility through coca. First, the technological changes in transportation did away with the hard labor needed to physically transport the product from farm to market, an occupation traditionally dominated by men. Then, the increased capital and accumulation of wealth created by the coca trade allowed women traders to purchase and control these new means of transportation. What results is a new network of commerce founded on a traditional agricultural product, dominated by women, and incorporating modern technology to fuel further growth. Returning to *El viento de la cordillera*, it is precisely this type of independent businesswoman that emerges in the figure of the Satuka, even more complex than the "capitalist" traders observed by Spedding above.

As previously stated in the discussion of outsiders in the novel, Satuka owns the plantation Narciso is brought to work on, with coffee and citrus trees covering the hills surrounding the main house and drying areas and shelling machinery on the property (*El viento* 8). With little other description offered of Satuka at this point, it becomes immediately apparent that this commercial agricultural component is one of the essential elements in her character construction. On this initial plane, the Satuka appears to be simply a producer of cash crops desired in the capital of La Paz (coffee and citrus fruits),

highlighting one, legitimate source of income and wealth. Throughout the novel, it is also revealed that Satuka participates in the coca exchange, producing and trading coca leaves for traditional chewing, also contributing to the gains derived from participation in the local agriculture system. By casting her as a land / plantation owner, Spedding establishes a female protagonist which contrasts the stereotypical patriarchal oligarchy of the past. In order to fully subvert this structure, however, it is not suffice to limit the Satuka to agricultural production. For this reason, Satuka's transportation and trade networks are disclosed in conjunction with the description of her plantation:

> El carro salía y venía. Como unas dos veces a la semana iba a La Paz y volvía. Traía harína; al contrario de la ciudad, donde Doña Satuka no faltaba el pan. Al volver del trabajo muchas veces hicieron desvíos para cargar leña rajada para el horno… Tampoco faltaba coca y cigarro, o los eternos platanitos cocidos y pescaditos. (10)

Ownership over, and participation in, this steady commercial trade with the capital are the elements that provide Satuka with power and economic mobility in her community. In fact, the entire novel is marked by a rhythm created from the constant movement of the satuka between the cities. More so than any other aspect, it is this access to commercial mobility that challenges the traditional patriarchy of the Bolivian business environment.[90] Her plantation produces the agricultural goods which are coveted in the urban capital (in

[90] In the three books which compose Spedding's Andean trilogy, the Satuka figure is constantly linked to commercial transport and it is through this link that she establishes her power in the novels. In *Manuel y Fortunato*, Satuka's marriage to the cacique provides this link, whereas in *De cuando en cuando* it is her role as a pilot which facilitates this movement.

particular, the sweet variety of Yungas coca previously referenced in this chapter), yielding great profits, while the goods she transports back to her Yungas community from La Paz are equally scarce and lucrative. The description of the wide availability of bread, tobacco, and coca in the Yungas community emphasizes the fruitfulness of Satuka's business venture. It should be stressed that Satuka's production, trade, and transport of coca is presented as commonplace, fitting perfectly into the Yungas economy without sensationalism or disruption to the community. Recalling the millennial history of coca in the Andes, the commercialization and movement of the coca leaf were an essential part of everyday life in the region, well before the arrival of the Spanish colonizers. Satuka is maintaining this commercial tradition alive in the modern day Yungas.

This transport is not limited to commercial commodities. Each trip described in the novel also underscores the movement of people, where the vehicle stops along the way to pick up and drop off passengers, showing that Satuka's vehicle is both freight *and* public transportation. In this sense, Spedding reveals her protagonist's second main source of income and wealth. The ability to transport goods and people is closely linked to her livelihood, both physical and economic, with interruptions in the trade marked by deadly or near-death experiences. For example, recalling the death of her husband, Satuka explains that he dies as a result of a curse placed on him when an occult offering is placed in the wheel well of their car (27 – 28). Jealous of the couple's success, an unknown assailant uses the car on a supernatural level to halt their prosperity and physically harm them. Later in the narrative, Satuka's car dies during a run to the capital, nearly killing all passengers, the driver, and herself when the vehicle's brakes and

transmission fail (38 – 40). The vehicle only avoids sliding off a cliff due to the driver's craftiness behind the wheel. Finally, Satuka and her daughter unknowingly hitch a ride on the truck carrying the gringos and the cocaine produced by Narciso. Again, the vehicle crashes, this time as a result of a high-speed police chase, and the mother and daughter narrowly escape death when they jump from the rear of the vehicle prior to impact (41 – 42). These instances of disruption of transportation occur following lapses in Satuka's traditional Aymara responsibilities in the community, serving as a quasi-cosmic penance. The death of the husband follows Satuka's temporary abandonment of, and failure to feed, her snake properly, the snake is a holy gift from her spiritual godmother, that promises to bring good fortune is properly cared for (26). The two later car crashes also appear to result from moments of negligence, as both follow Narciso and Segundino's turn to cocaine paste. Returning to the concept of the coca life cycle cited previously in this section, both Segundino and Narciso are presented as immature and inexperienced *chakra*, requiring close guidance or "pruning" just like a coca plant. In this respect, Satuka provides them with too much space to grow on their own, resulting in poor decisions and unnecessary dangers to their persons. As consequence for this slip of judgment, Satuka's transportation and commerce are halted.

Redemption for Satuka's transgressions comes as she uses the ill-gotten gains of her underlings to reestablish a sense of order in the community and renew the transportation network. While it is never stated outright, there is a strong implication that she uses the funds from the sale of cocaine she removes from the second crash to finance the purchase of a new vehicle for herself (58). Firmly connected to the traditions of her

community, Satuka's ability to take advantage of this lucrative business opportunity reveals her adaptability. This characteristic is taken to its highest degree with regard to her own participation in cocaine paste production. When charged with being the "intellectual author" of Narciso and Segundino's operation, she vehemently denies participation in drug trafficking and is eventually acquitted of all charges. Yet the reader perceives that beginning and end of the novel includes scenes with Satuka lending Don Freddy (her neighbor and, later, her new husband) coca for the specific purpose of paste production (8, 85).

Spedding's critique of the coca/cocaine debate centers on this dubious involvement in illegal activities. As a traditional coca merchant, she amasses great wealth and creates a fluid network of trade that is in harmony with the Aymara, the Yungas region, and its agricultural economy. Likewise, the production and trade of illegal cocaine paste is only fruitful when it adheres to these traditions, in particular that of *ayni*. The turn to paste production, on the part of both the Satuka through her supplying raw coca and Don Freddy by organizing the maceration pits, is a reaction to a change in the local economy prompted by outside, foreign entities. Spedding chooses to include this element of ambiguity to show how Satuka creatively, and responsibly, adapts to the incursion of cocaine demand from abroad.

The author's greatest achievement by the end of the novel is that it is difficult for the reader to pass negative judgment on Satuka, in spite of her participation in the illegal trade. In this sense, the critique in the novel is not against the legal status of the drug production or its sensational presentation, but rather the cultural and traditional

significance of the coca plant among the Aymara. The use of the *ayni*, the "outsiders," and the Satuka in Alison Spedding's *El viento de la cordillera* contribute to the creation of a uniquely Bolivian narco-narrative, which is firmly planted in the coca reality of the Yungas region and the Aymara people and which presents the story of the drug trade in a way unlike any of the popular examples of this fiction found throughout Latin America.

HOMERO CARVALHO OLIVA'S *LA CONSPIRACIÓN DE LOS VIEJOS*

Bolivia's Eastern departments have shown a relative absence in the cultural dialogue regarding the drug trade, lacking a dominant voice and narrative to accurately represent the historical and symbolic perspective of the region. This absence cannot be attributed to a lack of authors from the area, as iconic writers such as Wolfango Montes Vannuci and Manfredo Kempff have consistently produced novels portraying the *Oriente* region of Bolivia in fiction, incorporating colloquial speech and customs in their works, including Kempff's *Luna de locos* (1998).[91] Yet Montes Vannuci's acclaimed 1988 novel, *Jonás y la ballena rosada*, serves as one of the only works of fiction to date to directly address the prevalence of drug trafficking in the region and its impact on society.[92] Beyond this, there is little cultural representation of this region's lived experience of the growth of the Bolivian trade.

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[91] In Bolivian geography, the Oriente refers to the eastern-most departments of the country, including Beni, Pando, and Santa Cruz. See Map 5.

[92] For a more detailed analysis of this novel, refer to Chapter 1 of the dissertation.

Given the absence of such a narrative, Homero Carvalho Oliva's recent tale of revenge, tradition, and community, *La conspiración de los viejos* (2011), becomes all the more distinct. Over the last two decades, Carvalho Oliva has established himself as one of the leading literary voices to come out of Bolivia's eastern departments. Hailing from the department of Beni and now residing in Santa Cruz, Carvalho Oliva has twice won Bolivia's top literary prize, el Premio Nacional de Novela (1995 & 2008), and continues to produce a vast array of novels, poems, screenplays, and essays. While the subject matter and critique of Carvalho Oliva's work vary as much as his choice of literary genre, his recent decision to return to his home department of Beni to tell the tale of a contract killing and, in turn, evoke the recent history of Bolivia's notorious drug kingpin, Roberto Suárez Gómez, merits closer attention. In this section I will examine Carvalho Oliva's use of the *camba* in narrating a collective crime, interpreted through René Girard's *Violence and the Sacred*, and the resurrection of the region's narco-history through the figure of a contract killer.

Camba, the *Nación Camba*, and El Rey de la Cocaína

When discussing the Bolivian *Oriente*, the term *camba* is synonymous with both its culture and people. According to the Diccionario enciclopédico cruceño, the word *camba* was used as a term of endearment in the *chiriguano* tribe and has also been linked

to the guaraní word for friend (Peña Claros and Boschetti, 153 – 154).[93] Later, the term took on negative racial and classist connotations, often used to refer to someone as "negro" or of the lower working or rural classes (154). In *Problemas de la autonomía en el Oriente Boliviano* (2007), H.C.F. Mansilla maintains that the term was again transformed in the second half of the 20th century:

> En la actualidad (a partir de aproximadamente 1970) *camba* se asocia con dos conceptos diferentes e igualmente fundamentales: (1) miembro de la comunidad étnico-cultural del *Oriente* boliviano (opuesto a los collas andinos, por ejemplo), y (2) persona amiga, abierta y hospitalaria. (39)[94]

In highlighting this shift in usage, Mansilla reveals a deliberate distinction, in language and in identity, which is one of the great nuances of the region when compared to the rest of Bolivia. In the *Oriente*, there exists a constant push to demarcate the political, cultural, ethnic, and economic differences of the *camba*, both with relation to themselves and in opposition to the rest of Bolivia. The term itself adjusts to the environment in which it is employed; representing a regional / ethnic identity when marking the difference from Bolivians of Andean descent and later serving as either a compliment (*persona amiga*) or an insult (*lower working or rural class*) when addressing people within the class of *camba*.

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[93] Peña Claros, Claudia and Boschetti, Alejandra. *Desafiar al mito camba-colla, interculturidad, poder y resistencia en el Oriente boliviano*. La Paz: Fundación UNIR Bolivia, 2008. Print

[94] Mansilla, H.C.F. *Problemas de la autonomía en el Oriente boliviano: La ideología de la Nación Camba en el espejo de las fuentes documentales*. Santa Cruz de la Sierra: Editorial El Pais, 2007. Print.

Mansilla elaborates on the formation and definition of this ethnic population, distinct to the Andean population of La Paz and the early viceroyalty of Alto Peru, through his example of the foundation of the city of Santa Cruz, an economic and political center in the *Oriente*:

> … Santa Cruz fue, evidentemente, un centro de irradiación de un tipo peculiar de la cultura española y católica. El resultado fue un modelo civilizatorio con una élite muy fuerte de blancos, terratenientes y militares, y una masa laboral de indígenas, a veces en condiciones cercanas a la esclavitud. Pese a ello y hasta la segunda mitad del siglo XX esta masa laboral no tuvo la consciencia colectiva de resistencia al invasor ni de pertenecer a una cultura indígena propia. (22)

From its foundation, the inhabitants of Santa Cruz represented a racial / ethnic dynamic directly related to their white, European colonizers. As Mansilla points out, even the masses of indigenous workers bore a distinct ethnic identity to that of the Andean populations, but lacked the type of collective ethnic consciousness present in the mountainous regions, such as those described in Alison Spedding's work. As colonization in the region expanded, the ethnic model of Santa Cruz followed suit, spreading to what would later be known as the departments of Beni and Pando. This monopolized power in these departments in the hands of white landholders of European descent for centuries to come.

Examining the ethnic composition of the recent *Nación Camba* political movement to come out of Santa Cruz, Peña Claros and Boschetti show how Mansilla's model remains in effect today:

> En cuanto a las características atribuidas al *camba*, todos los autores acuerdan en su condición étnica y cultural mestiza. Con un discurso que tiene como fundamento la supuesta existencia de un carácter cruceño primigenio, producto del mestizaje de los colonizadores españoles y de los pueblos originarios del *Oriente*, y como base de la continuidad histórica de la región, es que los autores consultados describen a los primeros pobladores de la región como base étnica del *camba* actual. (155)

The contemporary *camba* identity is understood to be a result of the colonizing project referenced by Mansilla, with the legacy of the *mestizo* population forming the ideal and the norm.[95] By fiercely clinging to the historical ideology of the image of the *mestizo*, groups such as the *Nación Camba* have been able to foment a sense of ethnic collectivity to promote cultural and political projects. The historical narrative behind the colonization of the region further fuels this collectivity, as Mansilla points out that:

> Por espacio de casi cuatrocientos años – desde mediados del siglo XVI a la mitad del siglo XX – el área de Santa Cruz se halló en una especia de autonomía más o menos forzada, similar a un aislamiento geográfico y cultural, debido a las

[95] Throughout Latin America, the term *mestizo* refers to a multi-racial person of European and indigenous descent.

> dificultades de transportes y comunicaciones … Estos factores históricos juegan hasta hoy un cierto papel en la ideología de la nación *camba*. Pablo Pinto Mosqueira, por ejemplo, sostiene que el desarrollo socio-político de Santa Cruz en la era colonial puede ser calificado como de básicamente autónomo con referencia al Alto Perú, cuyas autoridades no habrían contribuido en nada esencial al solventar las necesidades de Santa Cruz. (24)

Following colonization, Santa Cruz, and the *Oriente* in general, were geographically and culturally isolated from the *colla* centers of the new republic for centuries.[96] The economic and political success of the *Oriente* region later created a sense of independence and a "self-made" mentality embedded in the patriarchal, landowning oligarchy. The *camba* identity incorporates all of these elements in its constant opposition to the *colla* of the Andean region. The *Nación Camba* plays a crucial role in promoting these ideals and differences as part of its contemporary political project.

Founded in 2000, the *Nación Camba* Liberation Movement, commonly referred to as simply *Nación Camba*, proposes the implementation of a plurinational state in Bolivia, separating the country into autonomous regions based on particular ethnic and cultural similarities.[97] Prior to the election of Evo Morales as president in 2006, the *Nación Camba* focused its efforts on establishing a solid political bloc in the region through active campaigning for municipal positions. The ideology of the movement revolved

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[96] The term *colla* is quite controversial. Its technical definition refers to a person from the Occidental or Altiplano region of Bolivia, primarily the departments of La Paz, Oruro, and Potosi. However, in popular usage, in particular in the Oriente, the term takes on a pejorative connotation as it is often employed as an insult against the people of said region.

[97] For a more detailed analysis of the growth of the *Nación Camba* and the development of its ideology, see both H.C.F. Mansilla' and Peña Claros & Boschetti's works, referenced above.

around the concept of establishing a "pueblo-nación / región-nación" in these elections to further the autonomist goals of the party. Morales' rise to the presidency presented a direct assault to the cultural and ethnic solidarity of the group, as his rural, "colla" ancestry were at odds with the movement's rhetoric while the socialist politics of his political party, the Movement for Socialism (MAS), threatened to destabilize the autonomist efforts in the east. In response, the *Nación* intensified its confrontation against the federal government, pushing for decentralization on a national scale. In order to generate increased support and unification across the region, the *Nación*'s platform promoted a strong sense of pride in the *camba* heritage as a way of defending against the Andean cultural incursion propagated by the Morales regime. Traditional dress, local music, male leadership, emphasis on linguistic singularity, and a generalized disregard for anything related to the *colla* culture (i.e. the coca leaf), appeared at the *Nación*'s political rallies and became the dominant cultural narrative of the movement's ideology. The city of Santa Cruz became a crucial site around which neighboring departments rallied in cultural and political union and from which resistance to the Morales regime mounts. The cultural narrative of the Nación's brand of *camba* pride is thus exported to these departments and a heightened awareness of this ethnic collectivity spreads. The result has been a number of violent confrontations between supporters of the *Nación* and pro-Morales demonstrators or government forces, further polarizing the ethnic tensions in Bolivia.

In 1993, while on vacation visiting family, Bolivian writer Edmundo Paz Soldán was unexpectedly asked to the home of convicted drug kingpin Roberto Suárez Gómez.

Though under house arrest at the time of their encounter, Suárez was known as one of the key players in the development and expansion of the cocaine trade in Bolivia throughout the 70's and 80's, earning him the infamous title of "The King of Cocaine." The reason for this encounter was simple; Suárez wanted Paz Soldán to review the biographical manuscript he had written telling his story and offer an honest assessment of its literary merit.[98] Paz Soldán accepts the tasks and conditions set forth by Suárez, and then proceeds to spend the next few weeks reviewing the document. Upon completing his reading, Paz Soldán is struck by what little detail the manuscript offers regarding the element which most defined the public's perception of Suárez; his involvement in the drug trade. When asked for his assessment of the work, Paz Soldán is frank in stating that while Suárez's self-depiction of his success as an entrepreneur and rancher are interesting, any serious interest on the part of an editor would come from the desire to expose the dates and names of those associated with his illicit business. The two cordially part ways and, even after Suarez's death in 2000, the manuscript has never been published.[99]

Paz Soldán's verdict on to the manuscript emphasizes the type of popular intrigue that exists around the myth of Roberto Suárez Gómez. In 1981, he was featured on *60 Minutes* and personally called out by Mike Wallace as a drug trafficker on the program to

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[98] Paz Soldán offers a more detailed account of his encounter with Suárez in a chronicle he published in the March 2010 edition of *Vanity Fair – España*, also available on his personal blog: http://www.elboomeran.com/blog-post/117/8631/edmundo-paz-soldan/el-rey-de-la-coca-y-yo/

[99] To date, the only such biography to have been published about Roberto Suárez Gómez came in 2012 by his former wife, Ayda Levy. The book is entitled *El Rey de la Cocaína: Mi vida con Roberto Suárez Gómez y el nacimiento del primer narcoestado*.

a prime-time American audience. Suárez Gómez also served as the inspiration for the Bolivian drug baron in Oliver Stone's epic film *Scarface*. These are just a few of the instances which solidified Suárez Gómez's status as a crucial participant in the international drug trade, both in a popular cultural imagery and international law enforcement circles. His ties to Pablo Escobar's Medellin cartel only add to the folklore surrounding his participation in the trade. Consequently, one would expect the life story of the "Rey de la cocaína" to focus heavily on his illicit activities, in all their gritty details.

However, unlike the rags to riches story of Escobar, Suárez Gómez's begins at the heart of Beni's traditional oligarchy and is tame in comparison. As one of the wealthiest families in the department over various generations, dating back to the founding of the Republic, the Suárez lineage was responsible for some of the earliest economic exploration and development projects in the region, profiting on the early international demand for rubber (Levy 19 - 20). Roberto Suárez Gómez is born into the *camba* ruling class and never leaves. He builds upon his family's wealth through agricultural entrepreneurship and investment in cattle. In this sense, he is the model *beniano* male; wealthy, landowning, politically well connected, and paternalistically benevolent.[100] Ironically, he would have fit in perfectly with the leadership and ideology of the modern *Nación Camba* movement.

Even when openly involved in the cocaine trade, tales of Suárez Gómez's charity abounded, such as payment of school fees for entire provinces and covering university

[100] The term *beniano* refers to someone from the department of Beni.

tuition for students studying abroad, though this benevolence was often overshadowed by accounts of his illicit activities including his infamous role in the Cocaine coup (Levy 51).[101] Suárez Gómez is arguably one of *the most* important historical figures in the story of cocaine in Latin America, yet outside of *Scarface* he has been absent in the popular narrative of the Bolivian trade. Carvalho Oliva's decision to resurrect this polemic figure in his work of fiction marks an important turning point in Bolivian literature.

Collective Crime and Girardian Sacrifice in *La conspiración de los viejos*

Borrowing from García Márquez's *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, Homero Carvalho Oliva's *La conspiración de los viejos* (2011) takes place in a small town central plaza on a bench in front of the main cathedral, a story of vengeance, friendship and love develops as four old men gather to plot a murder. Carvallo transports the reader to the city of Trinidad, capital of Beni and the heart of Bolivia's *Oriente*. The motivation for their crime is simple; avenge the death of another friend's son, Benito. Too old to do the killing themselves, the four senior citizens carefully begin planning the death of the *camba* responsible for Benito's demise. In their preparations, the men encounter and subvert representatives of the city's most important institutions; the Church, the Court, and social opinion. As rumors of the seniors' activities spread throughout the town, more and more citizens sympathetic to their cause begin assisting in the plot, raising money to cover possible expenses and passing crucial information to help locate the resources

[101] For more on the Cocaine Coup, see Appendix A.

needed to carry out the assassination (i.e. guns and killers). In the process, a ghost of Beni's narco-past emerges in the form of Marcos Vaca Diez, a contract killer and former bodyguard for Roberto Suárez Gómez. Through his relationship with a local prostitute, Angélica, Vaca Diez attempts to reconcile his past and present actions and find salvation through love. As the moment of execution approaches, the plot becomes the town's worst kept secret, with all of its citizens anticipating and commenting on the crime. Following the murder, a collective sense of relief reigns over Trinidad, as an unjust killing is avenged and the town's communal project is executed with success.

The collective criminal element in the novel differentiates it from the common crime novel in that there is no moment when the readers can definitively identify an individual guilty party. From the plan's inception, the crime is a group effort, as one of the men, Huáscar Justiciano, ceremoniously opens the novel declaring "Hay que matarlo al *camba*" before a bench full of friends gathered in the center of town (Carvalho Oliva 13). Like a virus, the idea of killing the *camba* spreads throughout the town, and Huáscar's words are repeated by different characters as they become implicated in the plot, such as Purita, the wife of Miguel Durán, another member of the core group, as she states, "le preguntó si se trataba del *camba* ese – poniendo énfasis en el 'ese' –; sí, le respondió Miguel… Ah!, entonces está bien, pueden matarlo" (25). Every time the mantra is repeated and the killer is referred to as "el *camba*," the division between him and the community becomes greater. The term is hurled at his absent body as an insult, carrying the most negative racial and socio-economic undertones. Carvalho Oliva employs this term in reference to the murderer to purposefully evoke the flawed rhetoric

of the *Nación Camba*, in this case revealing the internal ethnic conflict between the *camba* pueblo versus the *camba* individual. What this shows is how quickly the sense of unity can be turned against one of their own. The collective action of the residents of Trinidad in the crime is better understood through the lens of René Girard's work on Sacrifice and the Scapegoat.

In his seminal work, *Violence and the Sacred*, René Girard examines the significance of sacrifice and the sacrificial victim across societies. In his formulation, killing, in the form of sacrifice, becomes necessary for maintaining a certain order in society. The process of a sacrifice can be divided into 3 parts, consisting of the sacrificial crisis, the selection of the victim, and the act of sacrifice itself. The sacrificial crisis is a necessary conflict, in whatever measure, that must be resolved through the sacrifice. There is an inherent violence present in the conflict that, through the sacrifice, will be transformed for the better. This transformation can be from bad to good, impure to pure, individual to collective, or any combination of these. Girard points out that during the sacrificial crisis it is the loss of distinction between these types of violence that prompts the need for a sacrifice:

> When the difference has been effaced [between types of violence], purification is no longer possible and impure, contagious, reciprocal violence spreads throughout the community . . . a crisis of distinctions – that is, a crisis affecting the cultural order. This cultural order is nothing more than a regulated system of distinctions

> in which the differences among individuals are used to establish their 'identity' and their mutual relationships. (49)

The cultural order must be maintained in order to reinforce the individual identities that exist within a given society. When this order is threatened, the social controls that manage behavior within that society begin to crumble.

Returning to *La conspiración*, the death of Benito represents the rupture of two separate cultural orders. Benito himself was an innocent fixture in Trinidad who later becomes sacred. The son of Alejandro Rodriguez, one of the "viejos" who met daily in the plaza, Benito was born with a mental disability that left him with the mind of a five year old in the body of a thirty year old adult. Following the death of his mother, Benito accompanied his father everywhere and was generally accepted in all social circles (Carvalho Oliva 39). In death, Benito "pasó de ser el hijo de Alejandro Rodríguez a convertirse en el hijo del pueblo" (46). The death of the "people's son" at the hands of a lowly fisherman, whether by accident or not, violates the balance of power in the town and upsets the first cultural order.[102] While Alejandro Rodríguez does not represent the wealthiest landowning elite that ruled the *Oriente* in the past, in the contemporary urban space of Trinidad he and his friends represent an order of power and respect stemming from their upper-middle class status and age. Therefore, the murder of his son Benito represents an assault against this order as well. The act of constantly calling the killer a

[102] Initially, it is unclear whether Benito was murdered by the fisherman or if the death occurred by accident without malicious intent.

"*camba*" in the pejorative sense represents the disdain felt by the old men and demarcates the difference between them and him.

The second cultural order violated by the murder stems from Benito's status as "el hijo del pueblo." The senseless murder sparks a general, collective outrage against the political and legal institutions. The sacrificial crisis which arises as a result is caused by the people's attempt to subvert these incapable representatives of power, as "Pasarían algunos días para que los rencores incubados en el pueblo produzcan una conspiración colectiva, hilando las palabras apropiadas en el tejido de la imaginación y la memoria del pueblo trinitario que, fecundándose mutuamente, y desencantado con los poderosos, quería sentir el poder en sus propias manos" (44). This desire to seek out their own justice is later satisfied by the old men's plan. However, before this occurs, the political and legal institutions attempt to regulate the crisis through their own intervention. During the hunt for Benito's murderer, and due to public pressure, the police launch a massive operation to locate the killer and, in the process, solve dozens of minor cases, locate and return innumerous items reported stolen, and interrupt business at several houses of vice (46 – 47). However, these actions do little more than disturb the petty criminal order in the city, causing a mini-crisis in the payment of police bribes which maintained these activities underground. The town still demands the arrest of the killer.

With the sacrificial crisis initiated by the death of Benito, the selection of the victim can then commence. Girard refers to the person to be sacrificed as the Surrogate-Victim, whose death represents the quelling of a collective problem that cannot be resolved otherwise:

> … the victim is considered a polluted object, whose living presence contaminates everything that comes in contact with it and whose death purges the community of its ill. . . This is why the *pharmakos* was paraded about the city. He was used as a kind of sponge to sop up impurities, and afterwards he was expelled or killed in a ceremony that involved the entire populace. (Girard 95)

The victim to be sacrificed in *La conspiración* is "El pescador, Francisco Noe Maturana, un hombre de cincuenta años, descendiente de los indígenas mojeños de la zona" (Carvalho Oliva 51). If allowed to live, Maturana would serve as a constant reminder of the death of Benito, the loss of the collective son. It becomes completely irrelevant that the circumstances of Benito's murder, as declared by Maturana himself, actually bordered on what we in the US would label manslaughter. Maturana would forever be the "*camba*" who got away with slapping the established order in the face, perhaps inspiring further acts of resistance. Maturana passes through what Girard regards as the duality of the victim, where the victim first serves as the target of insults and later draws to itself the violence infecting the original victim, in the process transforming a baneful violence into a beneficial violence. In Maturana's case, the first step is accomplished by being called "el *camba*" by the old men and their conspirators, thus stripping him of his individuality and identity and insulting his ethnic heritage. The second step comes during the sacrifice itself, where Maturana's violence against Benito is transformed by the old men's planned, collective violence and is redirected against Maturana himself, now a sacrificial victim.

Taking the analysis of Maturana as a sacrificial victim a step further, it is possible to note a larger political critique developing in the novel. Maturana, a rural worker of indigenous descent, upsets a traditional order of power and is immediately met with violence and resistance from this group. In a metaphorical sense, the scene is representative of the current political situation in Bolivia, with Maturana representing President Evo Morales and the old men representing the previous order, embodied by political groups such as the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR), the *Nación Camba*, and former president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. Following Maturana's act (i.e. Morales' rise to power), there exists a strong desire by the old order to right this wrong through sacrificial violence. In Girard's conception of the sacrificial victim, there is actually a double substitution occurring in the sacrifice between a surrogate victim and a ritual victim, where "The surrogate victim comes from inside the community, and the ritual victim must come from outside; otherwise the community might find it difficult to unite against it" (Girard 102). For *La conspiración*, the first victim is the visible, physical victim embodied by Maturana. He is the one paraded before the public and openly targeted. The second, the ritual victim, is purely symbolic and comes to represent President Evo Morales. Here, it is not an individual being destroyed, but rather an idea. It is possible to see the community of Trinidad "uniting against" this idea during the previously mentioned sacrificial crisis, as the town rises up against the political and legal institutions. This indicates that the sacrificial death of both the surrogate victim and the ritual victim will appease the collective community. Under the guise of Benito's murder,

Carvalho Oliva is cautiously raising the collective consciousness against the Morales regime and calling for political action against the presidency.

The assassination of Maturana at the hands of a contract killer completes Girard's sacrificial process. It is an act loaded with political, transformative, and collective powers. The sacrifice is also a cyclical act, especially for Maturana, as one act of violence begets another. If executed correctly, the sacrifice restores the order and peace of the community and placates future conflict. Girard explains the transformation of violence in the sacrifice as having the potential for regeneration in the community:

> … the violence directed against the surrogate victim might well be radically generative in that, by putting an end to the vicious and destructive cycle of violence, it simultaneously initiates another and constructive cycle, that of sacrificial rite – which protects the community from the same violence and allows culture to flourish. (92)

In this sense, the sacrifice creates the stability needed for growth and healing. For the contract killer MarcosVaca Diez, the death of Maturana resolves personal existential crisis, allowing him to accept his purpose in life as a killer and freeing him from the guilt of his past. He is able to move forward and seek out more work, accepting his role in Bolivian society. For the old men, there is a sense of accomplishment and purpose vindicated by Maturana's death; upon reuniting in the plaza after the assassination, they talk until late into the night and are unable to part ways, "Como si quisieran prolongar el encuentro temiendo que la despedida les arrebatase el placer de saber lo que sabían, el

placer de sentirse poderosos" (Carvalho Oliva 106). For the town of Trinidad, the collective act of violence against Maturana serves as a form of catharsis. Girard explains that this "Catharsis is performed in a structural setting so strikingly similar to that of unanimous violence that one can only conclude that it is a deliberate, if not entirely exact, imitation of unanimous violence" (99). By supporting the preparations for the crime, either symbolically or directly, the residents of Trinidad convert the death of Maturana into a collective crime befitting Girard's concept of unanimous violence. However, as an act of violent ritual, as opposed to an open act of violence per se, the collective crime can still perform its cathartic function and also prevent future violence in the form of a sacrificial crisis. The reader's role in the process is to piece together the story and act as the detective needed to decipher the order and meaning of the crime.

MarcosVaca Diez and the resurrection of the *camba* narco-past

While much of the focus of Carvalho Oliva's *La conspiración* revolves around the collective killing of Maturana, his choice of MarcosVaca Diez as the contract killer is crucial in incorporating the narco element into the narrative. Marco's function in the novel is two-fold; first representing the violence needed to kill Maturana, a skill acquired during his work as a drug bodyguard, and second serving as a living history of the *camba* involvement in the drug trade. In this first capacity, his past serves him well in the case of Maturana. His skillful violence is one acquired in the underbelly of the international drug community, as he recalls how after the increased law enforcements efforts in the

80s, "Marcos tuvo que escapar, se fue a Colombia a trabajar con gente de un cartel local que había conocido cuanto acompañó a Roberto Suárez a reunirse con Pablo Escobar" (61). Later, Marcos goes on to explain that, "Cuando las cosas se pusieron feas en Colombia, se fue a Brasil, regresó a Bolivia a finales del año 2007 porque sus contactos le hicieron saber que las antiguas líneas de narcotráfico se estaban reactivando que necesitaban de gente como él, capaz de amedrentar con la mirada y matar" (62). The sites through which Marcos passes reveal a fetish for narco-violence, foreign in the Bolivian context. In Colombia, Marcos' contacts in Medellin presumably teach him the ways of the young sicarios. This is confirmed later in the novel as Marcos' decision to kill Maturana from the back of a motorcycle bears the hallmark of the Colombian sicario (100). By his own admission, his time in Brazil was highlighted by his participation in the taking of a *favela* in Rio de Janeiro (74). In the sacrificial process, Marcos' narco-violence is the only weapon powerful enough to complete the sacrificial rite on behalf of the town. He is an ethereal figure who arrives in Trinidad at the beginning of the sacrificial crisis after having been called down by a collective memory. However, outside of this process, Marcos' presence in the town seems disjointed. He is the product of a spread culture of the drug trade, the face of narco-violence that does not have a place in Trinidad and therefore cannot establish any meaningful relationship or residence in the town. He is condemned to wander.

Through this wandering, Marcos' second function in the novel becomes much more crucial. As the living history of the *camba* drug trade, Marcos serves as a key counter-narrative to the changing popular narrative regarding the trade. Early in the

novel, one of the old men in the plaza expresses his disdain for an extravagant wedding he reads about in Santa Cruz, where the family being celebrated was part of the "narco-arrepentidos" who negotiated with the government during the 1980s in exchange for legal immunity (15). Later, Marcos expresses similar resentment towards this group of sell-outs, recalling how their cowardly negotiation with the government went against the ideals of the *beniano* male, essentially serving as the opposite to his boss Roberto Suárez who bravely resisted such temptations for easy resolution (61). These two moments in the novel, taken beyond the narrative itself, work as a living narco-history, preventing the white washing of history and erasure of the participation of the "narco-arrepentidos" in the drug trade. Similarly, Marcos' observations regarding the current state of the drug trade in Trinidad marks an interesting extra-narrative critique of the changing narco-political landscape:

> Al regresar a Bolivia, Marcos notó que algunas cosas habían cambiado, los dueños de la "merca" ya no eran los "narcos" benianos ni cruceños de antes, ahora eran unos cholos chapareños de origen quechua y aymara que estaban comprando las descuidadas . . . mansiones de los excapos de la cocaína. En las ciudades de Santa Cruz, La Paz, y Cochabamba se hablaban de los nuevos ricos del recién instaurado Estado Plurinacional, gente que estaba constituyendo una fuerte burguesía chola que no solamente poseía riquezas sino también el poder político. (62 – 63)

The changes occurring in the drug trade in the *Oriente* directly reflect the changes happening all over Bolivia under the presidency of Evo Morales. At the heart of the conflict is the ascent of the cholo middle-class to positions of political and economic power. Aided by the official recognition of their ethnic heritage under the newly formed Plurinational State, this middle-class continues its migration into neighboring departments from the Andean region, substituting the decadent order of *camba* power on all levels. Marcos' memory of the "wonder years" of the *camba* drug trade are needed to evoke the figure of Roberto Suárez Gómez, the quintessential *camba* representative of power; wealthy, landowning, entrepreneurial, and politically well-connected. This is the order of power which has been supplanted by the "new money" who are buying up the ex-capos' mansions and investing in business on their own. As with the sacrifice of Maturana, Marcos' connection to the *camba* drug history becomes the mechanism through which a critique of the current socio-political climate emerges.

TITO GUTIÉRREZ VARGAS' *MARIPOSA BLANCA*

No story of the Bolivian drug trade would be complete without mention of the heart of the contemporary debate over coca production; the Chapare. Flanked by the Andean foothills to the west and the Amazon Basin to the east, the Chapare province's fertile lands were prized for fueling the country's growing agricultural needs and modernization efforts. These same conditions would later contribute to the growth of coca production, both for traditional use and to meet the growing demand for raw materials to be turned into cocaine paste. This increased production and demand has also

led to an increase in anti-narcotics police and enforcement efforts in the region. Culturally, the region provided the backdrop for three of the only Bolivian novels to be specifically classified as narcofiction; *Mariposa blanca* (1990), *El demonio y las flores* (1998), and *Magdalena en el paraíso* (2001). These three novels form a trilogy of works by Tito Gutiérrez Vargas, all portraying the ever-changing conflict between coca cultivators, cocaine paste production, law enforcement, and the natural environment of the Chapare. While the three novels have been met with critical acclaim, having won top literary prizes, Gutiérrez Vargas' style of narrating the world of the Chapare, frequently judgmental, opens itself to criticism. I analyze his first novel, *Mariposa blanca*¸in order to identify how the plurality of characters and critical narrative voice in his writing fail to capture the nuances of coca in the Chapare. Borrowing again from René Girard's *Violence and the Sacred*, I show how Gutiérrez Vargas' multiple characters in the fictional town of Chinahuata, located in the Chapare region, create a perpetual sacrificial crisis through the inability to identify suitable victim for the sacrifice. Then, through dialogue with Hermann Herlinghaus' analysis of the novel in *Narcoepics*, I focus on how these moments of crises and violence, as shown from the narrator's perspective, reveal a moralistic judgment cast against the reality of the Chapare, calling into question the representation of the region in the novel.

The Chapare Province and Tito Gutiérrez Vargas

While much of the contemporary discourse of the Chapare province focuses on the drug trade, law enforcement, and the right to grow coca, the story of the region is

arguably more connected to the failures of a national political project and the phenomenon of internal migration. In *Kawsachun coca*, Alison Spedding explains that the region has been subject to continuous ebbs and flows of internal immigration, dating as far back as the early colonial Jesuit missions of the 17th century (Spedding 91). Though fertile, the dense vegetation and intense heat of the area often proved overwhelming for settlers accustomed to the temperate environment of the Bolivian Altiplano, spurring abandonment of these early settlements. Permanent settlement in the area only came as a result of modern colonization efforts, starting in the 1920's (91). The major push for development and colonization of the area came as a result of the National Revolution of 1952, which deposed the oligarchic-landowning nodes of power, which had ruled the country since the foundation of the Republic. The resulting Agrarian Reform of 1953 solidified colonization efforts in the Chapare. Returning to *Kawsachun coca*, Spedding explains that the new government, "reclutó a gente interesada, la llevó al lugar y les asigno lotes. Les prometieron asistencia técnica, créditos y la instalación de infraestructura, como caminos y escuelas" (92). Desperate to populate these areas, the government made countless political promises in order to secure a steady number of settlers needed to inhabit and develop the lands.

Beyond economic development and social outreach, Hugo Rodas Morales has suggested a deeper political motive spurring this push in his *Huanchaca: Modelo político-empresarial de la cocaína en Bolivia*, explaining that "como parte central del proceso del 52, se impulsó la colonización de otras regiones . . . en un proceso que se prolongó luego en la llamada 'marcha hacia el *Oriente*.' Se trataba sin duda de una

ampliación del *horizonte colla*, en tanto el poder político del nuevo Estado provenía de la zona andina y buscaba abrir sus límites hacia Santa Cruz" (Rodas Morales 41). As we have seen in the previous sections of this chapter, the distinct ethnic divisions in Bolivia translate into equally stringent political divisions, with the colla of La Paz often butting heads with the *camba* of Santa Cruz. Rodas Morales' suggestion that the rush to colonize the Chapare came from a desire to extend political and economic control from La Paz into the *Oriente* makes sense, given the agricultural superiority of Santa Cruz at the time of the Revolución Nacional. This would certainly explain the inability of the national government to deliver on the promises made to the Chapare settlers, as Spedding points out that for many of them the government "apenas les dieron mosquiteros y algo de semilla de arroz, nada más," prompting many settlers to abandon " estas colonias para volver a sus lugares de origen, pero los que se quedaron se dedicaron a plantar coca, porque ya había un mercado con rescatistas en Villa Tunari, y era la única manera de conseguir dinero para cubrir sus otras necesidades" (Spedding 92). It is important to highlight that it is the failure of the Bolivian state to support the colonization and agricultural project in the Chapare that provides the initial motivation for the increased production of coca in the region following the Revolución Nacional. At this point (the 1950s), most of the production was small-scale and destined for the traditional retail market feeding the needs of the miners in the surrounding regions. Additionally, as mentioned in the discussion of Alison Spedding's fiction, the variety of coca leaf produced in the Chapare was inferior to that produced in the Yungas. However, this motivation would quickly change as the increased demand for cocaine, primarily from

the US, throughout the 1970s and 80s would trigger an increased demand for raw coca needed for cocaine processing.

With the peak in demand for raw coca hitting at the end of the 1970s fueled by this growing consumption of cocaine in the US, migration to the Chapare from all parts of Bolivia showed a corresponding increase. Sporadic settlements appeared throughout the region, as the rumors of jobs and easy money spurred further waves of migration. For example, in Harry Sanabria's "The Discourse and Practice of Repression and Resistance in the Chapare," he explains the situation many Bolivian migrants faced:

> Caught between runaway inflation and declining real income, and fleeing the 1982– 1983 drought, peasants primarily from Cochabamaba's highlands and valleys were flocking to the Chapare, the colonization zone of that Department. Their immediate objective was to grow and market coca, which by that time was (and still is) almost all diverted to the processing of cocaine paste, and, ultimately, cocaine. (172)

The political and economic upheaval of the time, combined with difficult growing conditions in their home territories, prompted countless Bolivians to seek their fortune in the heart of the Chapare.[103] The spontaneous settlements which arose in the area resembled the "boom towns" of the early American west, complete with lawlessness, vice, and the growth of auxiliary businesses supporting the boom, offering everything

[103] The period indicated by Sanabria corresponds to the aftermath left by Garcia Meza's Cocaine Coup, which resulted in a succession of temporary dictators and military leaders assuming the presidency until the rise of Hernan Siles, whose administration was unable to control the hyperinflation which had gripped the Bolivian economy. See Appendix A.

from simple grocery items to kerosene and plastic needed to produce cocaine paste. Sanabria's example underscores the continuous movement of temporary populations into and out of the Chapare region. Spedding and Rodas Morales reinforce this observation, continuously employing the term "población flotante" in both of their works to describe the migratory shifts that have marked the area since the Revolución Nacional. It is this temporary labor population which has the most significant impact on the ethnic composition of the region and which is most present in the work of Tito Gutiérrez Vargas to be discussed.

Along with the boom in the demand for raw coca and the surge in migration to the Chapare, came the concentration of anti-narcotics operations in the area supported by the DEA. By pursuing a supply-side solution to the problem of drug consumption in the US, the DEA, along with other American aid organizations, used the Chapare region of Bolivia in the early to mid 1980s as a proving ground for anti-narcotics operations. Prior to the approval of the Law 1008, discussed in the analysis of *El viento de la cordillera*, the DEA provided military funding, training, and logistical support for Bolivian forces while aid organizations, such as USAID, attempted to promote alternative crop development and substitution programs.[104] Following the Law 1008's approval, both American organizations in conjunction with Bolivian law enforcement intensified operations in the area. The dubious wording of the law, and the tiered system of establishing zones of permissible, transitory, and illicit coca production led to the

[104] For more a more detailed account of these efforts, see Harry Sanabria's "The Discourse and Practice of Repression and Resistance in the Chapare" in *Coca, Cocaine, and the Bolivian Reality* (1997).

widespread use of questionable tactics to coerce compliance with the regulations. For example, Sanabria cites how much of the "voluntary" eradication in the Chapare, a zone slated for gradual extermination of coca production, had little to do with conscious decisions on the part of the coca farmers and more to do with the waning coca prices and intimidation by military forces (Sanabria 175 – 178). Likewise, US military and DEA continued training Bolivian forces and participating in raids to rid the region of its raw material. All of these elements contribute, to greater and lesser degrees, to the fictional Chapare created by Tito Gutiérrez Vargas.

Born in the Department of Cochabamba, bordering the Chapare region, Tito Gutiérrez Vargas has solidified himself as one of the leading fiction writers to address the issue of Bolivian narcotrafficking. Of his four published novels, his narco-trilogy has received the most circulation and public attention. Both *Mariposa blanca* and *El demonio y las flores* received Bolivia's top literary prize, the Premio de Novela "Enrich Guttentag," upon publication. His most recent work, and the last installment of the narco-trilogy, *Magdalena en el paraíso*, received the Premio Nacional de Novela in 2000, the successor to the Enrich Guttentag prize. Additionally, this last novel received publication by the illustrious Editorial Alfaguara as part of the prize. With publications dates ranging from 1990 to 2001, Gutiérrez Vargas' narco-triology chronicles the various phases of the war on drugs in Bolivian Chapare. By shifting the perspective from that of a migrant to the State and, finally, to an omniscient, all-seeing narrator, across the three works, Gutiérrez Vargas does well in portraying the many strata of power and influence which co-exist in the Chapare around the production of coca. However, the

condemnatory voice and interjections of his narrators limits the extent to which his portrayal of the Chapare is effective. In *Mariposa blanca*, I will show how the frequent moralistic critiques of the main protagonist, Lazaro, detract from the reader's ability to fully assimilate into the Chapare, via Chinahuata, which Gutiérrez Vargas attempts to create.

Crisis and Characters in *Mariposa blanca*

Mariposa blanca follows Lázaro and Josefina as they navigate the town of Chinahuata in search of the riches promised by the Chapare coca trade. Leaving their home because of Josefina's pregnancy and the couple's poverty, they arrive in Chinahuata with little more than the clothes on their backs and rumors of the prosperity to be found in the Chapare. Previously a medical student back home, Lázaro is thrust into the world of the *matones*, or coca stompers, as his first means of income. It is through this job that Gutiérrez Vargas is able to elaborate on the various steps in the production of cocaine paste, providing an almost ethnographic description of the processing of coca leaves into cocaine paste and the hierarchy of roles in the sale and distribution of the paste. The maceration pit is also the world of deception, where everyone Lázaro encounters seems to have come from another part of the country and is only introduced to him through nicknames, such as el Profe, el *Camba*, and el Administrador. As Lázaro becomes more involved in the processing of coca, his dialogue with his co-workers allows him to pass judgment on the activities of those who live in Chinahuata. Upon becoming a matón and further integrating himself into the

environment of Chinahuata (gaining the nickname Galilea in the process), Lázaro's life begins to spiral out of control; he experiences the threat of death when his camp gets raided and he must flee, he loses Josefina to a local coca dealer, he is robbed in a bar of all the money he makes during his work as a matón, and, later, he loses his only true friend and mentor, el Profe, in a confrontation with the police. Similarly, Josefina's life turns to hardship the moment she abandons Lázaro; her new partner turns out to be a drunk who abuses her, the pregnancy is revealed to be a lie to convince Lázaro to go to Chinahuata, and she is nearly beaten to death in a moment of domestic violence. Just as his namesake is resurrected from the dead in the Bible's Gospel of John, Lázaro is freed from the hellish conditions of Chinahuata through el Profe's death and ultimately reunites with Josefina as they both ride a bus out of town, forever abandoning the nightmare of their Dantesque foray into the coca trade of the Chapare.[105]

The world of Chinahuata created in the novel is one that is mediated by violence. The threat of armed attacks, either from the *leopardos*, the nickname given to the corrupt Bolivian drug police, or from *atracadores*, hijackers who work independently stealing shipments of cocaine paste, is a daily possibility. Regarding the "arming" of Chinahuata, el *Camba*, a fellow *matón*, tells the tale of one of the town's most infamous *atracadores*, el Malvinas. In his fight against the traffickers and the leopardos, Malvinas' brazen acts of violence set off an arms race:

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[105] Lázaro had accompanied El Profe to pick up a payment in a remote location. On the trip back, the two are alerted as to approaching narcotics agents. Just before being discovered and gunned down, El Profe throws a bag of money to the fleeing Lázaro, granting him the means to execute his freedom and exodus from Chinahuata.

> Fue una ocurrencia muy lamentable. Yo creo que de ahí en adelante, verdaderamente Chinahuata se hizo un lugar de riesgo. No para el Ejército, la Polícia . . . pero sí para la población , para toda la gente dedicada al comercio, al transporte . . . Me refiero a que el ejemplo de portar armas cundió . . . En adelante, el portar fierros se generalizó. Mucha gente cargaba revólveres, escopetas, fusiles, hasta metralletas . . . Comenzaron a menudear las muertes, tanto accidentales como aquellas debidas a asesinatos . . . (115)

The generalized threat of gun violence sparked by Malvinas' personal war sets into motion an arming mechanism that cannot be detained. Since almost all of the business components in the town are linked to the production of coca and processing of cocaine paste, and this production is under threat of attack, a "kill-or-be killed" mentality takes hold. The availability of weapons is fed by a corrupt police force, willing to sell off military grade machine guns for a profit, and the growth of an underground arms market willing to meet this new demand. El *Camba*'s story is a memory of what happened to Malvinas prior to his death. However, this account of the arming of Chinahuata inadvertently reveals the initial crisis which leads to further instability and violence in the community.

Recalling René Girard's work on sacrifice, it is possible to equate this moment with the start of a sacrificial crisis. As noted in the Girardian discussion of Carvalho Oliva's *La conspiración*, one of the triggers that signals the start of a sacrificial crisis in a given community is the disappearance of the sacrificial rites, the moment when it is impossible to sort out the different types of violence occurring in a community (impure

and purifying), and the reciprocal, transmittable character of this violence as it spreads throughout the cultural order (Girard 49). The arming of Chinahuata eliminates the distinction between legal violence and illegal violence, between sacrifice and random destruction, and the reciprocity of violence quickly follows. For example, the initial crew of matones who work for el Profe processing coca are turned into soldiers later in the novel. In this role, they take up machine guns and revolvers to settle a vendetta for el Profe, attacking the settlement of an enemy landowner (Gutiérrez Vargas 205 – 217).[106] This reciprocity is not limited to gun violence, as Josefina's beating from her partner Matias reveals how interpersonal violence also surges in the sacrificial crisis:

> La agarró del cuello y la zarandeaba de un lado a otro. Las patadas le llovían por todo el cuerpo. A ella le pareció que el filo de la abarca le abría una brecha en cada patada. Lo puñetazos, de la misma manera, se le estrellaban en toda su hermosa humanidad. Sentía que una de sus orejas tenía el tamaño de una sandia. El párpado derecho no le obedecía más . . . (234)

Josefina's physical body is destroyed through the violence of her partner, indicating that the sacrificial crisis is so widespread and out of control that it is capable of penetrating even the interior, intimate spaces of the home and the relationship. Gutiérrez Vargas purposefully initiates and escalates this sacrificial crisis in order to maintain a sense of violent chaos in Chinahuata. In this way, quelling of the sacrificial crisis appears

[106] This landowner is later revealed to be Matias, the new boyfriend of Josefina.

impossible to achieve and Lázaro is able to witness the downfall first-hand, casting judgment at will.

Further complicating resolution of the sacrificial crisis is the inability to find an appropriate sacrificial victim. Returning to Girard's notion of the surrogate victim as a "polluted object, whose living presence contaminates everything that comes in contact with it and whose death purges the community of its ill," it is possible to see that in Chinahuata, no one person can fulfill the criteria and serve as a suitable victim (Girard 95). Unlike Carvalho Oliva's use of Maturana, who emerges as a clear target in his role as surrogate victim from the very beginning of the text, the characters in *Mariposa blanca* all reveal similar backgrounds and are "contaminated" by the same elements, making it difficult to select only one suitable surrogate victim. Here, Lázaro's criticisms of Chinahuata and the multiplicity of characters in the novel become essential. Gutiérrez Vargas collects a series of archetypes in the novel to represent the phenomenon of migration to the Chapare. Lázaro is young, educated student who naively follows his heart instead of his brain into Chinahuata. Josefina is an older seductress, who attempts to use her sexuality to prey on men, in a search for financial stability. El Profe is a former political militant, whose clash with the Bolivian government leaves him with the trauma of torture. El *Camba* is the typical, easy-going laborer from the *Oriente* who seems content with enjoying the vice Chinahuata has to offer, warmly embracing those around him with his care-free attitude. Alicia is the young, submissive chola who cooks for El Profe's camp and is presented as motherly, yet sexually appealing. Even Matias, the new boyfriend to Josefina, is presented as a successful coca dealer, amassing 15

hectares of coca fields, but whose violent temperament and alcoholism turn him into a colla monster. Each person goes to Chinahuata to fulfill the same financial need to earn money unavailable in any other part of the country. As Rodas Morales and Spedding show, the Chapare region of this time was a melting pot of all of Bolivia's ethnic groups seeking some sort of fortune. Yet in the novel's depiction of Chinahuata, all of these characters are all corrupted by the common environment of vice and sin. Therefore, it is impossible to select one of them as a sacrificial victim, to judge one to be "more corrupt" than the others, and hence bring an end to the cycle of violence plaguing daily life. Instead, the death of any one archetype is met by an influx of a substitute archetype, as the waves of migration continue. A simple example comes from the case of Malvinas; his death does not represent the end of the atracadores because he is instead replaced by other hijackers, including El *Camba*, who becomes an atracador by the end of the novel. The violence and diversity of characters in Chinahuata cause Lázaro to lash out against this environment through condemnatory observations about his surroundings.

Hermann Herlinghaus has observed that "There is a moralizing zest that emanates from what could be called narratorial agency, as it moves between third-person narration and dialogic passages, especially when emitting 'omniscient' commentary," and that "… its prose is rich not only in phenomenal detail but also with internal contradictions between social commentary and a 'sermonizing' tone" (Herlinghaus 70). As Herlinghaus implies, the descriptions of the pits, the coca hierarchy, and the popular rumors of the town's many residents and episodes provides a unique perspective as to the realities of living in the Chapare during this boom in coca production. However, it is this "internal

contradiction" with regard to the other observations made by Lázaro that becomes the most difficult element in the novel to digest. Lázaro hypocritically wields judgment against all those who surround him even while he is actively participating in the same actions as them. While working in the pit, Lázaro questions why his fellow matones, show no remorse for their part in the drug business, stating "¿Por qué no se forma en ellos la conciencia delictiva? ¿Por qué no tienen problemas de arrepentimiento? ¿Será porque no ven a sus víctimas?" He condemns the other laborers for their lack of guilt and inability to recognize their role in the problem of addiction and death generated by the production of cocaine. Yet with regard to his own accountability for the same actions, it is sufficient that he recognizes the existence of fault in participating in the pit, without directly associating himself with this activity. In essence, the same moral weight does not apply to him and he does not perform an auto-condemnation. This contrasts greatly with the depiction of Narciso's work in the maceration pit in Spedding's *El viento de la cordillera*, where an equally vivid depiction of life in the pits emerges without the obtrusiveness of these condemnatory monologues. The difference stems from Narciso's *integration into* the community versus Lázaro's *observation of* the community, a purposefully distanced perspective.

Likewise, after a night of debauchery with el Profe and el *Camba*, Lázaro assumes an exaggerated, altruistic stance on his infidelity, stating "Ya lo sé y no viviré golpeándome el pecho; per, de todos modos, voy a pagarle a la sociedad por el poquito de basura que le eché. Aunque no precisamente en una celda policial, esa no es una medicina que puede curar la herida, ni es una moneda que beneficie a la sociedad.

¡Encontraré el modo!" (Gutiérrez Vargas 151 – 152). Lázaro finally feels the guilt of his actions, both for his infidelity towards Josefina and for his participation in the pit, but he does not fully assume the corresponding punishment for these actions. The influence of his privileged position is revealed in his offer to pay back society for the "trash" he contributed to it, as he sees himself as too good for prison, as too valuable for society's wellbeing to be locked up and follow the normal legal procedure. Herlinghaus argues that this constant allocation of guilt in the novel drives much of the moralistically skewed perspective in the narrative voice. He explains that:

> The young man who speaks to us as the afflicted hero of *Mariposa blanca* is profoundly fascinated by intoxication, and while following a need to project his desire outward and onto others, he believes that rational detachment can make him, at last, the observer of a "fallen world," not its victim. It is that very attitude that Gutiérrez Vargas inscribes in his exploratory novel: subjectivity is constructed in the passage from experience to confession to remediation (75 – 76)

Lázaro's process of distancing, or rather his distanced, privileged position continuously present from the moment of his arrival to Chinahuata, is what allows his to participate in the town's illicit activities but only receive a certain degree of the guilt. His ability to recognize the guilt and use reason to dissect the greater implications of their actions permits him the opportunity for atonement. However, the "experience – confession – remedy" chain is only successful if the "fallen world" environment persists. This parameter is what makes Girard's concept of the sacrificial crisis so critical to *Mariposa*

blanca; in order for Lázaro to fulfill his remedy / atonement, Chinahuata must be kept in constant turmoil. Should a suitable sacrificial victim arise and bring an end to the violence plaguing the town, Lázaro would be left with no recourse with which to assert his own moral superiority, as resolution and equality would then be extended to all the residents.

In the end, Lázaro is the only one who gains any type of redemption from his stay in Chinahuata. He is given the financial security needed to restart his life wherever he chooses through el Profe throwing him the bag of money at his moment of death, thus fulfilling his initial goal in the Chapare (Gutiérrez Vargas 275). With this token, he can leave Chinahuata without remorse. All of the other characters are left to face their personal downfalls from which there is no return; El Profe dies violently, el *Camba* fails as an atracador and must flee for his life, Alicia is rejected by Lázaro and is left to fend for herself in Chinahuata, and a now pregnant Josefina is abandoned by Lázaro as he leaves the city for good. The implication of Lázaro's successful flight from the city is simple; it shows that he was right. Through all of the guilt and judgment and disgrace, Lázaro comes out on top, so his observations were correct and just. This final element in Gutiérrez Vargas' depiction of the Chapare is the most problematic. The town of Chinahuata is put into perpetual turmoil in order to allow this outsider to find redemption. In the process, the nuances of the boom in the coca trade at this important historical moment in Bolivian history are overlooked due to the narrator's disruptive need to pass judgment.

Recalling the construction of the Yungas in Spedding's novel and the city of Trinidad in Carvalho Oliva's work, the element that most distinguishes the successful use of these sites in the work of fiction is their ability to incorporate and communicate the sense of belonging and community of these sites in the narrative. Through this, all of the underlying factors surrounding the rise of coca and cocaine production in these sites begin to emerge; the ethnic tensions, the economic impact, the political systems, the social changes. A new vision of Bolivian literature emerges. The inability of a novel like *Mariposa blanca* to capture this same integration, and yet still receive such high levels of critical praise and acclaim, begs the question what type of standards are being employed when the prizes are decided and the criticism distributed?

CONCLUSION

In examining the works of Alison Spedding, Hugo Carvalho Oliva, and Tito Gutiérrez Vargas, I analyzed the conflict between traditional coca growers and traffickers who grow coca as raw materials for cocaine. My study also illuminated the social and political trauma that resulted from the cocaine boom during the 1980s throughout the country. Spedding's use of the *ayni* Narciso and the matriarch Satuka provide an original narrative of the community relationships and commerce that have secured the millennial trade in traditional coca production. Homero Carvalho Oliva's story of the contemporary political conflicts surrounding the *camba* identity serves to re-examine the region's relationship with narcotrafficking in the past. Finally, Tito Gutiérrez Vargas' conception of the Chapare community is fraught with incongruities and inconsistencies that fail to

capture the local characteristics surrounding the internal migration which converted the Chapare into a coca producing region.

Map 5: Map of the Yungas and Chapare Regions of Bolivia. Source – Wikipedia Commons. Public domain. Available online. <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coca_cultivation_bolivia.png >

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I made the case that mainstream portrayals of the drug trade in contemporary Latin American literary production show a bias towards over-representation of the uppermost and lowermost levels of the trade. The growth of the subgenre of the sicaresca novel, portraying the assassins from the shantytowns of Medellín, and the popularity of the sensationalist biographical works about the life of drug capo Pablo Escobar emphasize this tendency in the Colombian context. The exportation and adaptation of both of these types of literary representation of narcotrafficking for a broader, international media market speaks to the continued success of these depictions among the consumer public. Across the continent, the continued use of violence to narrate contemporary, urban experiences provides little contrast to the bloody tales of the narcos that saturate mainstream cultural markets. This intense style of representing drug trafficking often singles out poor, marginalized agents of the drug trade as the sole purveyors of violence and corruption, without accounting for the larger networks of participation that make the trade possible in the first place.

The aim of this dissertation has been to explore a corpus of novels that provide an alternate narration of illegal drug trafficking across Latin America and delve into the middle spaces of the trade that are under-reported in mainstream media and publications. I have found that these novels articulate previously invisible spaces and agents of narcotrafficking, that they offer an alternate mapping of the trade across three Latin American countries, and that they offer new insight regarding how narcotrafficking

creates moral and ethical crises among people from different social classes. More specifically, I have analyzed the representation of mid-level participants and made visible the activities that they perform in support of the continued growth of the illegal drug trade across Bolivia, Colombia, and Brazil. As there is little scholarship devoted to the cultural representations of the middle space of narcotrafficking, or to examining the process by which these spaces are omitted from dominant narratives of the trade, my primary goal has been to call attention to the unique ways that these works of narcofiction imagine and represent the loss of scruples prompted by the pursuit of money from the drug trade among mid-level participants. Such a reading makes it possible to also consider the consequential issues of culpability and impunity in the nations which house narcotrafficking and the divisions, both political and other, which are created to maintain these structures.

This study performs close readings of the narratives of ten different authors representing three countries in Latin America writing in two different languages. Representing three different regions in Bolivia, I analyze the works of Juan de Recacoechea, José Wolfango Montes Vanucci, Homero Carvalho Oliva, and Tito Gutiérrez Vargas. Complementing these authors is a novel by British-born Alison Spedding, who has lived in and studied the Yungas region of Bolivia for the last 20 years. Colombian authors Darío Jaramillo Agudelo and Juan Gabriel Vásquez narrate their works from the perspective of their hometowns of Medellín and Bogotá, respectively. Authors Rubem Fonseca, Patrícia Melo, and Marçal Aquino, who live in the urban centers of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, present Brazilian novels about the drug trade.

By positioning the geographical framework of the novels around the countries of Bolivia, Colombia, and Brazil, I expose the local nuances that differentiate the narcofictions from one another and also dialogue with the transnational movement of the trade present across the novels. In doing so, I avoid narrowing the scope of the middle space of the trade to a single, homogeneous image, but rather offer complex, multilayered manifestations of mid-level narcotrafficking in a variety of differentiated social, economic, and ethnic situations.

In the first chapter, I used Deleuze's and Guatarri's conceptions of production machines and Bourdieu's class purchase preferences to take up the discussion about the central theme of the chapter; the development of the figure of the middleman in drug trafficking in the work of Juan de Recacoechea, José Wolfango Montes Vanucci, Darío Jaramillo Agudelo, and Juan Gabriel Vásquez. Briefly, the use and development of middle roles in the novels make it possible to identify several key elements across the narrations that result from the growth of the illegal trade. These include the use of familial networks to access employment, the unexpected rise of personal economic struggles, and varying crises of identity.

My textual analysis reveals that the protagonists in the novels who begin the stories with access to legitimate employment as educators (i.e. professors and teachers) inevitably encounter a crisis in their social class that prompts them to pursue employment in the drug trade. Specifically, there are external pressures from their families and societies to assume a determined masculine mandate as heads of households, yet their inability to maintain a job in their profession makes them unable to fulfill this role. To

remedy this situation, the protagonists draw on their networks of personal contacts to find more profitable employment, resulting in their entrance into the drug trade at the middle levels of trafficking, as money laundering agents, international drug mules, and pilot. In assuming the role of the middleman the protagonist must change to fit his new role. The new life-style carries with it a new behavior and worldview. Whether through a change in conduct or integration into the narco-machine, the driving force of the narratives is this behavioral transformation of the protagonists with regard to wealth. The stories of the middlemen show the creation of a new moral value imposed by the money of the drug trade. The middlemen conform to this moral standard and fully integrate themselves into the consumption machine perpetuated by an endless illegal market of narcotrafficking.

In the second chapter, I examined the geographic displacement of the drug trade in Brazil by examining how authors Rubem Fonseca, Patrícia Melo, and Marçal Aquino, situate their stories on the western national border, along the frontier with Bolivia and Paraguay. I analyzed how relationships of power and subordination in the context of Brazilian narcotrafficking presented in fiction novels engage in a process of resignifying the moral and ethical boundaries created by the trafficking of illegal drugs. The agents and environments that evolve in this frontier space alter the popular articulation of the Brazilian drug trade and the significance of the border itself. By adopting the concepts of border relations outlined by sociologist David Vila in *Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders*, as well as José Manuel Valenzuela Arce's understanding of cultural border interactions and zones of tolerance, I illustrated the novels' creation of expansive networks of political and moral corruption, traversing the national and regional territory,

to show how violence acts as a means of negotiating regional relationships of power. Rubem Fonseca and Patrícia Melo both choose the border city of Corumbá to create their works of narcofiction, while Marçal Aquino's novel uses the mobility of the drug trade and organized crime to traverse the entire western national boundary. In reconstituting these representations of the frontier, the chapter explored the textual construction of the border and analyzed those who negotiate these transnational spaces. Here, the depictions of cattle farmers, CEOs, politicians, and drug traffickers, highlighted the involvement of representatives of the traditional, rural oligarchy in drug trafficking.

In the third chapter, I focused on narcofiction produced in Bolivia to show that, depending on the region being articulated, Bolivian narconarratives change significantly based on the dominant ethnicity of that region. In examining the works of Alison Spedding, Hugo Carvalho Oliva, and Tito Gutiérrez Vargas, I analyzed the conflict between traditional coca growers and traffickers who grow coca as raw materials for cocaine. My study also illuminated the social and political trauma that resulted from the cocaine boom during the 1980s throughout the country. British ex-pat Alison Spedding created an archeology of the coca leaf in the Yungas through her trilogy of novels. In analyzing her second novel, I dialogued with her ethnographic research of the Yungas region to articulate why she had to use fiction to successfully tell the story (archeology) of coca in the Yungas and the cocaine trades that emerged here. I showed how labor roles and the creation of an indigenous landowning matriarch highlight the ethnic component of the Yungas in the novel. My readings of the novels of of Carvalho Oliva and Gutiérrez Vargas incorporated the theoretical lens of René Girard's concepts of

sacrifice and the sacrificial victim as elaborated in *Violence and the Sacred*. I showed how the selection of the *camba* murderer as the sacrificial victim in the city of Trinidad in Carvalho Oliva's work, meets the conditions needed to quell the sacrificial crisis of the community. In addition, this moment of crisis in the eastern city of Trinidad, revives the region's history with narcotrafficking, resulting in a retelling of this history and a critique of the current state of the illegal drug trade in the region. As a critique against Gutiérrez Vargas' production of a generic narcotext, lacking the local nuances of the story of the trade, I analyzed how the selection of a sacrificial victim in his work fails to quell the sacrificial crisis in the Chapare because of the impossibility of finding a suitable viction in Gutiérrez Vargas' conception of the town in the Chapare. Through these three readings, I set up the argument that Bolivian narconarratives offer regional distinctions that are unlike any found throughout Latin America.

The breadth of my dissertation topic, while important in establishing a solid analysis of the mid-level roles of narcotrafficking in literary representation, also has some limitations. Chief among these has been the lack of an established literary criticism dedicated to this area of study. I have been lucky enough to dialogue with Gabriela Polit Dueñas' *Narrating Narcos* (2013) and Herman Herlinghaus' *Narcoepics* (2013) in this regard, as two of the leading scholars addressing narcofiction that portrays this middle space, but have not been able to locate a critical literary study solely dedicated to this topic. Another limitation has been establishing the comparison between narcofiction and crime fiction. Given the variety of novels I included in my study, it was difficult to find exact trends in crime fiction subgenres and fully analyze how these works exceed the

traditional definitions for these classifications, without losing focus of the fact that I chose to approach these works from the perspective of narcofiction. While the line between the two is tenuous, I feel that there is sufficient claim to be made in defining these crime novels that deal with the drug trade as transgressive works within that literary genre.

Outside of my study of mid-level participants in the drug trade and the varying ethnic literary representations of this world, the dissertation opens the door for continued work on the novels studied. My analysis of the Satuka character in the work of Alison Spedding begins a discussion of female agency and criminality in the literary world of the drug trade. To advance this concept further, I would like to examine other examples of "narcas" in narcofiction from throughout Latin America. There has yet to be a study collecting and analyzing works which exclusively features female participation. In analyzing these works, the issue of authorship emerges, as the majority of Colombian novels portraying women in the drug trade are of male authorship (i.e. *Rosario Tijeras*), whereas there are Brazilian and Bolivian novels of female authorship which do the same, including Patrícia Melo's *Inferno* (2000) and the Satuka figure in Alison Spedding's two other novels.

In addition to presenting a reformulation of the Brazilian national border from the perspective of crime and narcotrafficking, the works of Fonseca, Melo, and Aquino also provide a nuanced look at the construction of masculinity in crime fiction. The male agents of power present in the novel are not presented as hyper-masculine, but rather possessing a fractured masculinity. I would like to continue examining the presentation

of the masculine subject in these novels to show how they break from the stereotypical patriarchal representation of men in crime novels. For example in Marçal Aquino's *Cabeça a prêmio*, The Brothers Menezes, Dênis, Brito, and Albano all reveal some type of rupture in the traditional representation of the rugged Pantanal man. I would like to examine how the male protagonists in novel present a fractured masculinity through the use of violence, homosexuality, sexual fetish, and failed interpersonal relationships. Likewise, Melo's nameless narrator and Fonseca's Mandrake and Camilo Fuentes all reveal indications of what I term a fractured masculinity through the trauma of their past relationships and professions.

As a final extension of the dissertation, I would like to study the lasting legacy of the Bolivian Cocaine Coup in literary representation of the drug trade. In July of 1980, General Luis García Meza orchestrated one of the boldest government takeovers in the Americas by colluding with Bolivia's most powerful drug dealers and military officials in a violent bid for power. The Cocaine Coup, as it was later denominated, only lasted a year, but in that short time the administration eliminated all political opposition and, through active participation, legitimized the illicit business of cocaine trafficking. By financing the coup, the nation's largest drug traffickers, in turn, attained tremendous power and political influence. I feature an Appendix of this particular historical event because, in the course of my research, it became apparent that this event affected the regional cultural representation of the drug trade. The Bolivian novels of Alison Spedding, Hugo Carvalho Oliva, and Juan de Recacoechea, in addition to Brazilian Rubem Fonseca, all make reference to the Cocaine Coup. It is possible to carry out a

study examining the cultural manifestations of this unprecedented historical–political event that temporarily legitimized the transnational sale and transport of cocaine in Bolivia.

As a final reflection, I would like to emphasize that the contribution of this study lies in offering a historical, geographical, and cultural account of the mid-level participants in narcotrafficking. This thesis thus takes up the discussions and debates around the literary representation of the drug trade, but sets itself apart from a body of critical studies that focus on the violent agents of the trade, above all the figure of the young urban dealer or assassin. I take issue with the critical over-emphasis on the highest and lowest levels of the drug trade and with the fact that the mid-level participants have not been the subjects of sustained critical attention. By placing novels from Bolivia, Colombia, and Brazil in dialogue, I remove the linguistic barriers that have prevented the formation of a truly transnational Latin American study of the narratives of the middle spaces of the illegal drug trade. In doing so, my work reveals that, across linguistic, cultural, and national divides, the local narratives of these less visible roles narrate how greed, depravity, and a lack of values, are not exclusive of the poor or of any one region.

APPENDIX A: BOLIVIA AND THE COCAINE COUP

July 17, 1980 in Bolivia also provided the type of theatrics that would make for a thrilling film. It was on this day that General Luis García Meza orchestrated a coup d'état that would be known to future generations as the Cocaine Coup. All of the necessary players found a part in the overthrow; a former dictator facing corruption charges (Ex-Dictator Hugo Banzer), a heavy-handed officer coordinating the troops (Colonel Luis Arce-Gomez), not-so-subtle narco-financiers (Roberto Suarez, Alfredo Guitierrez, and Jose Gasser), a ruthless ex-Nazi SS officer commanding mercenaries on their behalf (Klaus Barbie a.k.a. The Butcher of Lyon), an ominous group of black-clad paramilitary mercenaries (Los Novios de la Muerte), and a socialist opposition political leader who would be murdered (Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz). The combination of all of these elements on one national stage effectively established one of the most blatant, brazen collaborations of the drug trade and a national government in the history of the Americas. Regarding the political conditions that facilitated the overthrow, Bolivian scholar Roberto Laserna observes that:

> La caída del régimen presidido por el General Hugo Bánzer en 1978 abrió un período de profunda inestabilidad política, marcada por la creciente presión de las organizaciones sociales por establecer un sistema democrático basado en el respeto a la ley y a los derechos ciudadanos . . . La rápida sucesión de gobiernos, impuestos por la fuerza de las armas en unos casos, y en otros por la fuerza de la lucha popular, ponía en evidencia la estructural fragilidad del sistema político y

> legal del país. No puede sorprender, por ello, que en ese ambiente hubieran desarrollado aún más intensamente sus actividades los grupos clandestinos dedicados a la producción y exportación de la cocaína. (62)[107]

Following the revolution of 1952, the conservative, right-wing ruling parties had been relatively compliant with U.S. anti-narcotics efforts of the time. However, as Laserna observes, the rapid succession of temporary regimes created political instability and weakened the government's commitment to these efforts.[108] Instead, the nation's most powerful drug traffickers were the ones steadily gaining power and influence while amplifying political alliances.

In a slightly more spectacular account of García Meza's rise to power, former DEA agent Michael Levine 's *The Big White Lie* details the extent to which the new administration went to protect the nation's cocaine business, as "All major drug traffickers in prison were released, after they joined the neo-Nazis [Klaus Barbie's group] in their rampage" and "Government buildings were invaded and trafficker files were either carried off or burned" (58).[109] Additionally, the only potentially threatening opposition to the coup, Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz, leader of the Bolivian Socialist Falange, who had called for the prosecution of ex-dictator Hugo Banzer on charges of

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[107] Laserna, Roberto. *El Fracaso del Prohibicionismo: Estudios socioeconómicos para una historia de las políticas antidrogas en Bolivia*. La Paz: Fundación Vicente Pazos Kanki, 2011.

[108] According to Francisco Thoumi's *Illegal Drugs, Economy, and Society in the Andes*, "From November 1964 to October 1982, constitutional governments [in Bolivia] were in power fro 476 days and de facto military regimes for 3,488. Within this context, the 7-year Banzer dictatorship . . . was a remarkable exception" (120).

[109] Levine, Michael. *The Big White Lie: The CIA and the Cocaine/Crack Epidemic*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1993.

narcotrafficking and corruption, was subject to a brutal assassination.[110] Levine recounts that:

> Wounded by a bullet in his head, he [Quiroga Santa Cruz] was dragged off to the police headquarters to be the object of a game played by some of the torture experts imported from Argentina's dreaded Mechanic School of the Navy . . . These experts applied their "science" to Quiroga as a lesson to the Bolivians, who were a little backward in such matters. They kept Quiroga alive and suffering for hours. His castrated, tortured body was found days later in a place called "The Valley of the Moon" in southern La Paz. (58)

Through maneuvers such as the one described above, it is easy to see that García Meza's rise to power was swift, efficient, and extremely violent. With the opposition out of the picture and the nation under a police state, his administration was able to quickly get to work increasing sales of Bolivia's most important export at the time; cocaine. Hugo Rodas asserts that, "Durante García Meza (1981), un estudio de *Earth Satellite Corporation* (Washington), señalo que en 1980 se habrían producido 58.000 toneladas de coca; en 1981, 64.000 y en 1982, 82.000" (69).[111] However, García Meza's stay in power would be short-lived, as he was forced to resign from power in August of 1981, just over a year after having taken over. While the administration had come to an end, the power of the narco-networks that it fortified would linger on into the next decade.

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[110] As a novelist, Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz won the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction in 1964 for *Los Deshabitados*. For a complete eyewitness account of his assassination, see http://elpais.com/diario/1980/08/03/internacional/334101602_850215.html

[111] Rodas, Hugo. *Huanchaca: Modelo politico-empresarial de la cocaine en Bolivia*. La Paz: Plural Editores, 1996.

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